

**INTRODUCING GROUP WORK AS A TEACHING METHOD IN BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION I AT THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY:
AN ACTION RESEARCH CASE STUDY**

CYNTHIA KHETHIWE ZONDI

December 2006

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CYNTHIA KHETHIWE ZONDI

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE MASTERS DEGREE IN EDUCATION (HIGHER EDUCATION), IN THE
CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES, SCHOOL OF ADULT AND
HIGHER EDUCATION**

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**Supervisor
Ruth Searle – University of KwaZulu Natal**

December 2006

DECLARATION

I hereby declare this dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.



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CYNTHIA KHETHIWE ZONDI

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A special thank you to my family and friends for tolerance, love and support during the completion of this dissertation.

Thank you heavenly father for giving me the strength and the courage to finish when I was ready to give up.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Grandfather (Mr Elphas Zondi) and my Aunt (Mrs Louisa Ntombenhle Mnyandu) who both sadly passed away a few days apart during the write up of this dissertation.

“May your souls rest in peace”
With love from
Makhethy

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I explore the effect of introducing group work as one of the methods of teaching and learning in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology. Introducing group work was also an attempt to satisfy the needs of the workplace and at the same time incorporate the critical cross-field outcomes in the teaching of this particular subject. I explore the benefits and problems of using group work in higher education.

The study was conducted at the Durban University of Technology Riverside Campus with a sample of Business Administration I students, Business Administration III students as well as three lecturers in the Department of Office Management and Technology who lecture at the Durban Campus. The research involved the implementation and the reflections of exposing students to group work over the two cycles. The study was developed with the aim of using more innovative teaching methods than just lecturing. Learners were engaged in the group work project which involved searching for information as a group, doing group presentations, evaluating the presentations and reflecting on the whole process. After analysis of data collected, the process was revised and implemented again with another group of students in the second cycle followed by analysis of long term implications of group work. An exploration of the lecturers' perceptions of using group work as a teaching method was also done. Data was gathered from observations, questionnaires, focus group interviews and analysis of students' test results.

Results indicated that despite some problems associated with this method, there is scope for considering a variety of approaches to teaching of the subject Business Administration I, and group work can be one of the methods used. The findings showed that staff and students held positive perceptions on group work, and there were similarities in the benefits of using group work in education as identified by students, lecturers and the literature.

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7 MARCH 2007

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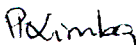
Dear Ms. Zondi

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0059/07M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Introducing group work as a teaching method in business administration 1 at the Durban Institute of Technology"

Yours faithfully


.....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA
RESEARCH OFFICE

cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchler)
cc. Supervisor (Ruth Searle)

2007-03-09

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce the main idea for the thesis, background to the study, as well as the context, the rationale as to why the study was important and the problems that the study was attempting to solve.

Since South Africa only became a democratic country twelve years ago, the education system is still in the process of undoing the imbalances of the past. Higher education in particular, needs to deal with different students coming from different schools ranging from well resourced schools to those that are highly under - resourced. "In the past syllabi were not integrated and working in teams was rarely part of the process. In fact it was considered as cheating" (Pretorius, 1998, p. 13). The challenge in higher education is to bridge the gap caused by the pre democratic government and implement transformation in teaching and learning. There is more and more emphasis on higher education professionals to continuously reflect on their current teaching and implement innovative and effective methods of teaching in their curriculum.

The idea for conducting this research stem from the teaching method that is currently used to lecture the subject Business Administration I, at the Durban Institute of Technology (known as the Durban University of Technology as of April 2006). Although this research started whilst the University was still called the Durban Institute of Technology, I will refer to it in this dissertation as the Durban University of Technology. The teaching method used at the moment in this particular subject is lecturing. Students sit and listen to lectures four periods a week (each period is forty minutes long). In those four periods a week lecturers present the material to students and students must then just absorb the information as it is presented. This has been the situation year after year. However some research indicates this may be problematic: "Various studies on attention levels during a 50 minute lecture reveal that during the first 10 minutes attention levels are high, but as the lecture proceeds

attention levels drop and continue to do so if students are not actively involved some way” (Fry, Ketteridge & Marshall, 1999, p. 86).

As a lecturer in the department I became interested in critically reviewing our own roles as teachers and researchers in this particular subject. It was imperative that we came up with ways of making teaching and learning more fun, meaningful and innovative and found more effective ways of teaching. This would be achieved by constantly engaging with our methods of teaching through action research in order to improve our own practice.

There is a wide range of teaching methods that we could use in order for our learners to learn effectively. Why were we using only one method of teaching? This study aimed, therefore, to investigate the effects of using group work as a teaching method with particular reference to the subject, Business Administration I, at the Durban University of Technology.

Business Administration I is one of the major subjects in the first year of study, towards obtaining a diploma in Office Management and Technology at the Durban University of Technology (Department of Office Management and Technology Departmental handbook 2006). This university is located in KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa. There are campuses in Durban and also in Pietermaritzburg. This study took place on one of the Pietermaritzburg campuses, namely, Riverside Campus. Another major subject that students study in their first year is Information Administration I (computer practical and theory).

As a lecturer in both these major subjects, I have noticed year after year how students struggle to understand the concepts and the new terminology that they are suddenly faced with after twelve years of their high school education. As Durban University of Technology educators, “we need to ensure that we use a variety of teaching methods, not just lecture dominated methods only, we need to ensure that there is active learner involvement in the teaching and learning process” (DUT Criteria for the review and evaluation of academic programmes 2004, p. 3). Students who are usually comfortable with a teacher- centred method of teaching are usually the ones who do

not want to be challenged, who only want to rely on teachers/lecturers for information. “A teacher - centred approach is also comfortable for teachers who are insecure in their ability to handle questions, discussions and debates in their classroom” (Gibbs, Brigden & Hellenberg, 2005, p. 5). These teachers want quick and easy ways of getting through the syllabus. Several alternative teaching methods such as group work, could promote active learning. Group work can be used as one of the teaching methods in Business Administration I, which may help students develop a range of skills needed in industry. This method would incorporate the critical cross field outcomes into the curriculum.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The name of the programme which this study focuses on is the National Diploma Office Management and Technology, and this name is relatively new as it only came into effect about five years ago. Previously students would study for a diploma in Secretarial Studies which was later called Diploma in Commercial Administration in the 1990s but is now called a Diploma in Office Management and Technology. Despite so many changes in the actual name of the diploma that students will obtain after their three years of study, nothing much has changed in terms of the content or the teaching methods used to lecture Business Administration I. On page seven of the Business Administration I Learner Guide (Appendix A), the different methods of teaching to be used are listed. My concern is that group work has never been used in this particular subject, although it is clearly stated in the study guide that group discussions will be encouraged whereby students will be divided into groups and each group will be given a topic for discussion and presentation.

The subject, Business Administration I, concentrates on providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills in order for them to perform their duties as office professionals. It covers important skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed by office professionals such as administrative assistants, management assistants, personal assistants and secretaries. The subject material is divided into two sections namely; the Management section and the Administration section. The Management section deals with equipping students with the overall knowledge of the business

environment, the different levels of management, how businesses are owned and managed as well as the knowledge of how the economy operates in general and the way it affects South Africa as a country. The Administration section deals with the different office duties which students could be expected to perform in any office environment from the basic duties to the more complex ones. There are no examinations conducted for this subject, students write tests at the end of each term and submit two assignments a year. All these assessments form the final year mark, and this is what determines whether a student can proceed on to Business Administration II or not. Business Administration II focuses more at a management level; it deals with what students will be able to do as middle office managers in an organisation.

1.3 THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

The writer, hereafter referred to in the first person, lectures Business Administration I, Information Administration I and Information Administration II at the Durban University of Technology's Riverside Campus. As a lecturer in these major subjects, I have noticed that students memorise the material given to them by lecturers without fully understanding the meaning. They give back lecturers' notes word for word when answering questions in the tests. When they are asked later about what they have learnt they are unable to recall. This is a problem that is also continuously raised by most lecturers during our departmental meetings. Second year lecturers complain about the fact that when students reach second year, they cannot remember what they have learnt in first year. They are only learning for the sake of obtaining a pass and moving on to the next level. As a lecturer in both major subjects, I also notice that students do not link the two major subjects.

Taking into consideration the problems noted above, it is evident that we as the Department of Office Management and Technology need to re-look at our teaching methods, as it can be seen that our students are not learning properly. For this reason there is a need to put in place a teaching method that will benefit students.

Davidson (2002) was faced with the same problem whereby students were using a surface approach to studying (studying for the sake of passing, not for life long learning). The main aim of the study was to encourage students to use a deep approach to study Accounting. Students were divided into two groups, one group used a deep approach to studying and one used a surface approach. The group that used a deep approach was able to link the facts presented in a logical manner. Twelve out of the 19 students who normally used a surface approach to study reported they failed some of their examinations. The aim of the study was to consider a relationship between study approach and student performance. The findings implied that Accounting educators should encourage students to develop the use of a deep approach to studying as it is linked to improved performance.

Norman, Rose & Lehmann (2004) summarised the different research papers from different disciplines which have used cooperative learning in their classrooms. This article classifies and summarizes cooperative learning papers from the different business disciplines, in order to provide a resource for educators who wish to promote collaboration in the classroom. The purpose of the paper was to identify cooperative learning studies from non-accounting business disciplines, categorize these studies, and summarize them as “best practices”. This cross disciplinary approach offers educators a resource on cooperative learning that can guide implementation in the classroom. Other disciplines such as Marketing and Management encourage cooperative learning.

In this article, most studies were done in the Marketing department. Students were put into the cooperative learning environment and experienced how cooperative learning helped in student motivation. Problems identified in this article included, dealing with procrastinators, free- riders ineffective teams, and conflict between team members. Students studying Management were asked to list issues that they had to deal with when working in groups. In the subject, Marketing, students preferred doing presentations themselves, as compared to a professor led method. In another Marketing class, students were asked to come up with methods which could help them to solve problems that they had experienced when working in groups. Suggestions that students came up with were things such as peer evaluation,

instructor observation, logs and confidential memos. These students also pointed out the characteristics which were important in keeping the group working together. These were things such as team size, gender and level of cohesion which were important for the group to be successful. The main purpose was to provide students with specific strategies and skills for handling difficult interpersonal situations when working in groups.

Management students were asked to self select into groups, which was the method that was encouraged by most authors, as students felt more comfortable if they were given the opportunity to divide themselves into groups. At the end of the course, each student was asked to write down his/her experiences about group work. Most students complained about the fact that some group members were not contributing as they were “free- riders”. This paper helped on the importance of cooperative learning in other subjects as a way of encouraging deeper understanding in students, therefore, helped me to see that cooperative learning could also be useful in my own subject.

There is not much that has been written on the teaching of the subject Business Administration I, however, a lot has been written on the teaching and learning of Accounting, Management and Marketing. It is important to refer to the different methods that Accounting educators use, as there is a vast portion of the syllabus in Business Administration I which is linked to Accounting. Therefore methods that make students learn Accounting better, could also help students to learn Business Administration I more effectively.

Silberman (1996) states that when teachers “flood” students with their own thoughts, they do not learn properly. They must rather be given the opportunity to process the information. Claxton & Murrell(1990, p. 29) refers to these types of teachers as petrol pump attendants, who are just there to “fill a child up with unleaded knowledge.” During the year this petrol pump attendant will check for any leaks in the child’s tank. We do a disservice to students when we provide them with a set of well constructed notes since it is the teacher who does the analysis, summarizing, organizing of information and students miss the opportunity of struggling on their own (Gravett and Geyser 2004).

As educators we should be guiding students to develop habits of outlining, organizing, reflecting and explaining to other students. Teaching and assessment methods that are used in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology, tend to reinforce the transmission mode, where students sit and listen to lecturers for four periods a week; there are no group discussions or group projects. Tests written at the end of each term are structured in such a way that students are asked to list facts that they have memorized. Students cannot link the different sections within the subject and across different subjects within their discipline. At the moment students are treated as passive learners who are there to receive information from lecturers. I strongly feel that we need to be exploring other ways of teaching and learning so that students could learn better and also be developed in other areas. In the previous years, Universities carefully enrolled selected students who met specified University entrance requirements (Biggs 1999). After restructuring of the tertiary education, classes have become much more diverse. Classes have increased in size as well as in diversity. Fewer staff members are teaching more students. In order for educators to cope with all this, they need to know that there is no single best teaching method for the subject and students. They need to experiment with different teaching methods and see what works for them in that particular subject. This study took the form of a two year cycle action research project whereby a group work project was implemented with students in the first cycle. The second cycle involved implementing the project again with another group of students, but within the same subject with changes identified in the previous cycle. The final year looked at whether the perceptions of students who were involved in the first cycle have changed regarding group work as well as investigating the lecturers' perceptions on this teaching method.

1.4 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

I decided to conduct this study for a number of reasons:

Firstly, I was doing a project for the Assessment Module in my coursework part of the Masters; I decided to implement group work for the first time in Business Administration I. Students enjoyed the subject and they were motivated to learn. I

was then interested in pursuing this further to see if this teaching method consistently affected learning..

Another reason why the study was conducted was because of the prospective employers who often call me to comment on the students' teamwork skills when they are looking for students to work for them. This has been a difficult question to answer as we do not prepare our students specifically for such skills through ways in which we teach. From the different phone calls, I realized that it is important to engage our students through different teaching methods; I thought perhaps using group work at an early stage could help them to be good team players, which would be an input in vocational skills. In order to confirm this, I conducted a survey telephonically with a sample of the companies that always take our students for experiential training (see Appendix B). Students are required to have 360 hours experiential training before they graduate with the National Diploma in Office Management and Technology. The aim of the survey was to investigate how important teamwork was for Administrators in the workplace. The survey confirmed that exposing students to group work was very important when training Administrators. "Administration is the backbone of any organization, administrators are always dealing with donors, customers etc, therefore it is important that they are trained as good team players" (Company A).

It was further emphasized in the survey that people who are exposed to group work in their training, tend to adapt easily and quicker in the workplace than those who have never done group work. The purpose of education and training should be to prepare learners for life in society and for performing a job according to the expectations in the workplace (Reynolds, 1994). Group work might be a way of doing this.

From being a student myself to being a Graduate Assistant and currently a lecturer in the same department and having no education discipline qualification, I have always had a few questions in mind: How can I help students to understand the subject better? What are other teaching methods that I can use in my classroom, instead of using the same chalk and talk method year after year?

I felt that one possible change that might probe a different kind of learning could be teaching using group work. Group work allows students to interact socially; it provides a platform where the subject material can be fully engaged with (Thorley and Gregory, 1994).

The main purpose of the study was to introduce students to working in groups, giving them a project to do as a group, conducting and evaluating classroom presentations and then reflecting on their own experiences of group work. The essence of this study was to see if group work would promote active learning which would encourage students to be involved in their own learning process in order for them to learn effectively. The main purpose of active learning should be to encourage a learner centred environment in our teaching methods (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002).

The Durban University of Technology has accepted the policies and structures of Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which puts a lot of emphasis on peer teaching and peer assessment of group work. One of the critical cross field outcomes states that students should be able to work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organization or community. Each department is expected to have plans for the inclusion and development of the critical cross field outcomes across the programme (DUT Guidelines for Good Practice 2004, p. 18).

Studies that have been conducted on group work indicate that group work helps students to learn better. In a study done by Mahabeer (1993) there was consensus that group work was more interesting, improved pupils' understanding of poetry, enhanced communication skills and developed social skills. This is also echoed in another study conducted by Sanders (2000) whereby students were found to be learning better when collaborating with other students. The present study differed in that it would focus on Business Administration I as a subject which had not yet been looked at, with the aim of improving the way students understand the subject and to act as a method of motivation.

The White Paper in Higher Education 1997 states that the purpose of higher education should be to meet the needs of society and the requirements of the labor market. These demands are also echoed by the Personal Skills Unit, Sheffield University 1991 as cited by Thorley and Gregory (1994, p. 119) in that the three most important characteristics which are significant to recruiters are; oral communication, team work and enthusiasm/motivation. However, some students say they hate working in groups; they prefer working alone and they do not like group work as a teaching/learning method (Nina and Brown, 2000). The attitudes of the staff and students at the beginning of the process create a challenge for the person introducing group work to “sell” this idea properly to staff and students.

1.5 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study was to:

- ❖ See if students and staff felt that group work affected the way teaching and learning happens in Business Administration I.

1.6 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main purpose of the study was to investigate staff and students responses to the introduction of group work as a teaching method, in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology, with the aim of obtaining answers to the following questions:

MAIN QUESTION

What is the effect of introducing group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology Riverside Campus?

SUB QUESTIONS

- What are perceived benefits of using group work as a teaching method?
- What are the perceptions of the students about using group work in Business Administration I?
- What are lecturers' responses to using group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology?

1.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter gives background and then describes the rationale for the study together with the main objectives and the problem that the study, is attempting to explore.

The literature reviewed which informed the study will be discussed in Chapter two.

Chapter three will give a detailed explanation of the methodology used in this study.

The findings will be presented and discussed in Chapter four. This research will be concluded in Chapter five together with discussing the issues for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Anderson (1990), a review of literature is a summary of analysis and interpretation of the theoretical, conceptual and research related to a topic or a theme. This chapter reviews the literature and theories relating to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and also focuses on the use of group work in teaching.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Educational researchers have an obligation to base their findings on a theoretical framework. Good classroom practices should stem from carefully researched theories. Educators are therefore faced with the responsibility to tell the truth in their research” (Bennet et al., 1996, p. 4). It is important for educators to link theory with what happens in their classrooms on a day to day basis. This study drew on theories related to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, Active learning, Group work, Deep learning, Surface learning, as well as Experiential learning and Constructivism which the study was aiming to put into action in the Business Administration I class at the Durban University of Technology.

Schunk (1996) defines a theory as a scientifically acceptable set of principles offered to explain a phenomenon. Theories provide a framework for interpreting observations; it is also important to link research findings with theory.

This research was based on the three theories of teaching and learning in higher education, active learning (I used active learning as my conceptual framework) and theories on group work.

2.3 TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A paradigm shift for College and University teaching as identified by Campbell and Smith (1997, p 272) is currently taking place in higher education. This paradigm shift is aimed at encouraging students to be involved in the learning process. However this does not imply that educators should drop the traditional ways of teaching completely, they need to use a variety of properly researched teaching methods. The new paradigm is also in line with Outcomes Based Education (OBE) that is currently being implemented and reviewed in South Africa which puts more emphasis on what the learner can do. “The old paradigm of college teaching was based on the untrained student mind being like a blank sheet of paper waiting for the instructor to write in it.” (Campbell and Smith, 1997, p. 289). Therefore, knowledge was just transferred from teachers to students. Students were striving to obtain certificates; as a result teachers maintained a competitive classroom structure in which students worked hard to outperform their classmates. Students wanted to study what was in the test only; they did not see the point of learning anything that they would not be tested on. Students sat quietly everyday and just listened to what the teacher had to say, there was no room for interaction. This is in line with Ramsden’s first theory which describes teaching as a telling or transmission process. In this theory a teacher is the only source of information. “Students are seen as passive recipients of the wisdom of a single speaker who is a teacher”(Ramsden, 1992, p. 111). The main focus here is on what the teacher does to students. Students are not given the opportunity to “experiment” on their own. They are not given the chance to look for information themselves. This is the current situation in the teaching of Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology. Students sit and only listen to lecturers feeding them with information.

“Many university teachers implicitly or explicitly define the task of teaching undergraduates as the transmission of authoritative content” (Ramsden, 2003, p. 108). This could be the reason why most lecturers still use lecture dominated methods to lecture students. In this first theory, it is assumed that students will only learn from the amount of information given to them by lecturers. Paulo Freire cited in Stage, Muller, Jilian & Simmons (1998, p. 52) believes that all persons can discover their ability to learn and acquire knowledge. We should

therefore not limit our students, we must believe that they do have the ability of acquiring knowledge on their own. Studies have shown that students retain 10 % of what they read, 26 % of what they hear, 30 % of what they see, 50 % of what they see and hear, 70 % of what they say and 90 % of what they say as they do something (Thorley and Gregory, 1994, p. 120). This is a signal to educators to look at our methods that we use to teach students.

“There is a lot of emphasis in dropping the old paradigm of teaching and adopting new paradigms” (Campbell and Smith, 1997, p. 291). In this new paradigm classmates and teachers are seen as collaborators rather than as obstacles to students. Students construct, discover, transform and extend their knowledge. Learning is something that the learner does not something that is done to a learner. Students learn by creating connections among the subject matter and across disciplines. It shifts learners to a deeper form of learning (deep learning is discussed under 2.7). The teacher’s role in this is to create the conditions within which students can construct meaning from new materials (as discussed under 2.4). The new paradigm for teaching could be associated with Ramsden’s second theory which refers to teaching as organizing students’ activities; it focuses on the students rather than the teachers (Ramsden, 1992, p. 113). Teachers/lecturers are just supervisors or facilitators. Students are to link their theoretical knowledge to their experience, for example, through experiential learning. This is important in promoting student- centred learning, whereby students are put in charge of their learning process. Students are given a chance to experiment with different ideas and come up with solutions to problems on their own, which is the best method to use when tackling different tasks given to them. I think the use of theory two is suitable for student development but it puts those students who are slow learners at a disadvantage and even those who are used to theory one in that they tend to lag behind.

The third theory looks at teaching and learning as two sides of the coin. Teaching is seen as a process of working cooperatively with learners to help them change their understanding so that they can learn better. This is where group work comes in whereby students are collaborating with lecturers and with one another and also contributing to the learning process. In theory three, other critical barriers to student learning are taken into consideration during teaching. Students are

encouraged to link what they are currently studying to their prior knowledge and must be able to construct their own knowledge in collaboration with the teacher and other students.

“Using theory three means listening to students and listening to other teachers in an effort to teach better, the lecturer using this theory will realise that he or she must include a variety of methods to help students learn” Ramsden (2003, p. 112). The aim of this study is to explore the possibility of a shift in the method of teaching Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology from the first theory to the third theory i.e. from a lecturer dominated method of teaching, to a situation whereby students and lecturers work together to contribute to obtaining information and therefore contributing to the learning process. There is a strong emphasis in shifting lecture dominated methods to more collaborative methods but it is evident that most educators are still using lecture dominated methods. This could be because they are under the impression that this is the one and only method to be used when teaching students or their work loads does not allow time for innovative teaching. In higher education lecturers can still play a major role in the learning process but students should be given some responsibility for their own learning. Effective teaching should not be just about following rules and principles, it should be about choosing a teaching method that is suitable for that particular subject and students.

The Department of Office Management and Technology at the Durban University of Technology operates in a very controlled environment, there are set rules which govern how each subject is to be taught, assessed and marked in both the Pietermaritzburg and Durban Campuses. This makes it difficult for lecturers to “explore” with different ways of teaching. That is why it was so important for me to properly research a teaching method that I wanted to implement in my own classroom in order to help the students to learn better. In order to do this I had to review different literature on how students learn, and how we as lecturers can help them to learn better. The literature shows that when students are given a chance to actively construct knowledge on their own rather than relying on lecturers only, they learn better. In the next section, the concept of allowing students to construct their own learning will be discussed in more detail.

2.4 CONSTRUCTIVISM

“Constructivism is a term that is known mainly by educational researchers, curriculum developers, trainers of teachers and teachers themselves”(Phillips, 2000, p. 1). It refers to a set of views about how individuals learn and how those who help them learn (for example teachers and lecturers) are expected to teach. Constructivism is also a way of promoting student centred learning. The learner selects and transforms information; the instructor should try and encourage students to discover principles by themselves. This approach claims that knowledge need not only be transmitted by a teacher to a learner; knowledge can also be constructed by learners. The way in which we teach our students has a big influence on how they learn. As educators we need to experiment with different methods of teaching and see what works better, so that students can learn effectively. From a constructivist perspective, learning is a process of assimilation and accommodation of disturbances in the subject’s experiential environment (Phillips, 2000, p. 49). It is important for educators to be aware of problems that can disturb student learning and to come up with solutions to address such problems.

“Constructivism tells us that we learn by fitting new understanding and knowledge, extending and supplanting, old understanding and knowledge” Fry et al., (1999, p. 23).

In higher education we need to encourage a shift from passive learning to active learning. Teachers should direct learning activities to students rather than to themselves. Constructivism is also in line with Ramsden’s third theory of teaching in higher education, mentioned previously, which sees teaching as two sides of the coin where learners and lecturers/teachers work together in order for effective learning to take place (Ramsden, 1992, p. 114).

In this study, I wanted to see if group work encouraged students to take responsibility for their own learning and not to rely on lecturers only. So far we have been using one method of teaching in the department in the four periods a week that are allocated for Business Administration I. I lecture this subject at the Pietermaritzburg Campus and my three colleagues lecture at the Durban Campus.

In all those four periods a week we (lecturers) prepare notes and transparencies and then we present the material to the learners. I feel that this method is not effective enough as most students do not learn properly; they only take down what the lecturer says and they memorise those notes for test purposes. When it comes to linking what they have learned previously they are unable to do it. For example students always ask the question - "Will this be in the test? Is it important?". These are the kind of questions that I normally receive from students, they only want to study what they will be tested on and are only interested in studying for the purpose of passing to the next level, their goals are not for life long learning. Constructivism must address the issue of how particular types of knowledge can be constructed.

In a constructivist environment teachers clarify rather than tell, they guide rather than direct and they facilitate student effort rather than imposing their own approaches. It is also important to expose students to constructing their own learning at an early stage for example as they enter tertiary education. This is also echoed by Chalmers and Fuller (1996, p. 38) in that; "teaching methods that are implemented in the early years of a course of study have an effect on the way in which students will go about learning". That was the reason why I decided to look at the teaching methods that we use in Business Administration I in our department. I felt that if students develop good learning habits in their first year, they will carry those habits for the rest of their academic life at a tertiary institution and as well as in other areas of life.

Learners must be given opportunities to construct their own learning, teachers must not only use lecture dominated, traditional methods of standing in front of the classroom and feeding students with information, they should perhaps rather use materials in which learners should be actively engaged in and working collaboratively with others. Such activities include observing, collecting data and working collaboratively with other students (dialectical constructivism). This is where students derive their knowledge from interactions with others and with the environment (Schunk, 1996).

As educators, our goal should be to provide “platforms” so that students can engage in a dialogue with others. “From the time of John Dewey and Jean Piaget constructivism have stressed the importance of students being active inquirers” (Phillips, 2000, p. 14). Asking students to be actively involved in the learning process, means for teachers letting go of ownership of knowledge and asking students to be actively involved in their own learning. “A related and dominant strand to constructivism is the idea that knowledge is not passively received, It is actively constructed” (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2002, p. 100). This does not however imply that only knowledge can be constructed; knowledge, and values as well as social interaction can be fostered through active learning.

2.5 ACTIVE LEARNING

“Research shows that traditional lecture methods whereby lecturers talk and students listen, are still a dominating teaching method in Colleges and Universities” Bonwell and Eison (1991, p. iii). This could be because of the way we as lecturers were also taught as students, therefore we tend to use the same methods in our teaching. “When workshops or books introduce alternative approaches, many faculty members become defensive, and discussions can quickly degenerate into heated debates” (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p 7). This means that some lecturers are still resistant to changing their methods of teaching. They do not want to get out of their ‘comfort zones.’ However Fry et al., (1999) indicate that in a traditional lecture the student takes a largely passive role and there is little opportunity for active learning.

Other forms of teaching whereby students also participate in the learning process, may be more effective than traditional lecture dominated methods. Students who are only taught using lecture dominated methods tend to depend more on other people and they lack the ability to work on their own. (Gibbs et al., 2005). Lecture dominated methods do not provide opportunities for deep processing of the subject matter (Ramsden, 1992) In this study, through group work I am aiming to engage the student more in the learning process and to promoting active learning. Students must do more than just listen, they must read, write, discuss or be engaged in solving problems. Bonwell and Eison (1991, p. iii) further mention

that several studies have shown that students prefer strategies which promote active learning as compared to traditional lectures.

Lea, Stephenson and Troy (2003) at the University of Plymouth UK found that when they were investigating the attitudes of higher education students to student-centred learning, students generally held positive views of student centred learning. They enjoyed being given the opportunity to look for information themselves instead of relying on lecturers all the time. Active learning involves putting our students in different situations whereby they read, view, listen, think deeply and communicate. It places the responsibility for learning in the hands of the learners themselves (Heide and Henderson, 2001).

Some of the literature uses the term student centred learning to describe active learning. Student- centred learning has more meaning, whereas lecture dominated methods concentrate on mastering the content. Student centred learning encourages students to be collaborative rather than focusing on individuals, as more focus is put on what the student can do and not on how much he/she can just absorb from the lecturer. “This type of learning is constructive whereas instruction is receptive” (Jonassen and Land, 2000, p. viii). There is a big emphasis in higher education today to provide learner- centred learning where students achieve more meaningful learning. One way to achieve this is by providing collaborative learning opportunities in the classroom (Cove and Love, 1996).

South Africa as a country is still promoting equity, human rights and responsibilities in the light of sustaining democracy. It is important that we do the same in our classrooms as well whereby students’ voices are heard, we must not just dictate to them; they also need to be actively involved in the learning process.

However, despite research and favourable findings there is still resistance to giving students responsibility for their own learning. Hammand and Collins (1991, p. 26) identified the common problems associated with student centred learning as:

- “Senior members of staff accusing others of lowering academic standards if they introduce student centred learning”. This is a problem that I have also observed amongst most educators who have been teaching for many years, they resist and fear change, they want to use the methods that were used by their own teachers ages ago but they still believe that these methods are correct and they don’t want to change.
- “When educators are insecure, they tend to resist change”. They fear that if they assign students more responsibility, they will end up being less important and be redundant in their jobs. They tend to want to own the subject and own the information. For example during our departmental meetings I have raised an issue of prescribing a textbook for Business Administration I, amongst many answers that I have been getting, one of them has been the fact that “students will not attend and we will teach fewer students in class” (Departmental meeting 2005-02-04). On the other hand, students also feel that lecturers are paid to lecture them. If a lecturer is giving too much responsibility to students, students tend to resist; they say things like: “he/she is lazy she/he wants us to do all the work”. This has a negative effect on the way students learn, they become too dependant on the lecturer, they do not want to work on their own.
- The student- centred activities take too much time; as a result most educators emphasize needing “time to cover the subject content”. Also given that lecturers are facing more and more demands on their time and constantly being judged in terms of research, they become less interested in engaging in time consuming changes unless absolutely necessary. However, giving students more responsibility can actually help the educator a lot because students will be meeting and discussing during their own time as well and not only during class time. The lecturer will only act as a facilitator.

There are different strategies that one can use to promote student centred- learning in the classroom. These include things such as problem solving, computer based instruction, group work etc. For the purposes of this study I decided to choose one strategy from the ones noted above i.e. group work.

Teaching should never happen without active learning. Being active while learning is better than being inactive, this is because when you are involved in the actual learning process you tend to gain more knowledge (Biggs, 1999).

O’Sullivan, Rice, Rogerson and Saunders (1996, p. 58) states that David Kolb’s model is based on a cycle which includes active learning (participating in an activity) and passive learning (learning by non-participation in an activity).

2.6 DAVID KOLB’S LEARNING CYCLE

Kolb (1984) describes learning as a cyclical model not only used to understand the importance of experiential learning, but for explaining how people learn. This cycle describes how a person observes and reflects from the experience and tries to make sense of what he/she has learnt in order to improve for the future.

Experiential learning is based on the notion that ideas are not fixed or unchangeable elements of thought but are formed and re-formed through experience. It is also a continuous process, often represented cyclically and being based on experience, it also implies that we all bring to learning situations our own ideas and beliefs at different levels of elaboration (Fry et al., 1999).

Using the experiential learning cycle will provide students with abilities and skills that they require. In higher education abilities may include things as:

- Writing essays and reports
- Giving presentations
- Chairing seminars
- Engaging in discussion
- Working on a task as part of a team
- Performing experiments
- Solving group problems
- Engaging in research
- Assessing peers

- Writing exams
 - Evaluating learning
- (Light, and Cox, 2001, p. 53)

“Kolb’s cycle has struck a chord with educators wanting to relate learning to experience and, as a result, has been very influential with those practising group work and other experiential methods” (Reynolds, 1994, p. 31).
Learning is not just a matter of memorising facts without understanding the content; it should be in the form of deep learning.

2.7 DEEP LEARNING, SURFACE LEARNING AND STRATEGIC LEARNING

Biggs (1999) differentiates between deep learning and surface learning. These concepts are very helpful when deciding on ways of improving teaching and learning. Surface learning is about getting the task done just because a student has to do it without proper understanding. It looks as if learning has taken place and yet in actual fact it has not. It is a matter of “sweeping under the carpet” (Biggs, 1999, p. 14). The task is done without any understanding as long as it is done and the student passes at the end. This type of learning could be linked with Ramsden’s first theory as identified in 2.3 whereby knowledge about the content and about the techniques are kept in separate compartments in the students’ minds. “The first theory shows some affinities with superficial engagement with content that typifies a surface approach” (Ramsden, 1992, p. 112). This is evident in our department, as most lecturers complain about the fact that students cannot recall what they have learnt in the previous year when they come to second year. Students who are using a surface approach cannot link what they have learnt and cannot apply their knowledge to real life situations. Memorising becomes a surface approach when it is used without understanding.

Deep learning deals with understanding, looking for meaning. Students are able to link what they have learnt in different sections within the subject, what they learn in other subjects as well as linking it to the real world. Our current teaching and assessment methods in Business Administration I, encourages a surface approach because students are taught by a lecturer using the traditional lecture

method, then they are asked to recall all the facts when answering questions in a test. The presence of a surface approach is an indication that we need to look at our teaching and assessment methods and try to improve them (Biggs, 1999).

Grundy (1994, p. 5) describes strategic learning as a process which involves reflecting and debating linkages, tensions and conflicts between issues and seeing these in the wider context. It is about solving difficult uncertain situations and handling dilemmas. This type of learning is used more in organizations whereby people are given complex projects, and issues that can affect organizations, teams and individuals. A strategic approach is related to an achievement motivation.

There was an indication that students were not learning properly, I felt a need to introduce another teaching method that would help students to learn better. It is important to help students learn using a deep approach to learning not just surface learning. Teaching and assessment methods often encourage a surface approach because they are not aligned to the aims of teaching the subject. Cooperative learning situations encourage self - directed learning. Students then use a deep approach to learning. Group work is often an effective method of achieving deep learning Thorley and Gregory (1994). Fry et al., (1999) further link intrinsic motivation with deep learning, and extrinsic motivation with surface learning.

Biggs (1999, p. 13) emphasizes that students learn effectively when:

- It is clear to teachers and students what the objectives are
- Students experience felt need to be there as equal participants in the learning process. Motivation is a good product of good teaching not its prerequisite.
- They feel free to concentrate on the task allocated to them.
- They can work collaboratively and in dialogue with others, both peers and teachers.

2.8 GROUP WORK

There are different terms which are used to describe group work; eg co-operative learning (although some books use this term to describe experiential learning), active learning and teamwork. According to Barnes, Ernst and Hyde (1999, p. 2) “A group is more than people who happen to be doing the same thing at the same time in the same place; to be a group, people must have some connection, some way in which they come together (either literally or in their minds) with a common aim, purpose, or function. This defines the boundary of the group, separating it from the surrounding environment of which, nevertheless, it is a part”.

From the above definition it can be noted that people who “happen” to be doing the same thing are also considered as a group, for example, people standing in a queue inside the bank. However this definition does not serve as a good indicator of group work in higher education it will mislead lecturers into thinking that students who just happen to be doing the same thing at the same time are considered as a group. Lecturers still need to facilitate group work by giving students proper goals to work towards. When introducing group work in higher education it should not be a matter of putting students together, but they must be given a goal to work towards. As mentioned by Van Rheede, Van Oudtshoorn and Hay (2004, p. 132) “A group can be described as a group of five to seven participants with a collective goal in mind”. Using group work is becoming increasingly common in higher education. Group work allows students to pool knowledge and skills (O’Sullivan et al., 1996). These participants can either be same sex groups or mixed sex groups. Reynolds (1994, p. 127) mentions that single sex groups may sometimes see each other differently as compared to mixed sex groups, therefore people will behave differently in single sex groups as compared to mixed sex groups.

Using group work in higher education has many benefits such as developing students with good communication skills, who are critical thinkers and develops students who are able to socialise with other people. Maree and Fraser (2004) define learning as a constructive, cumulative, self regulated, goal directed, collaborative, and individually different process of meaning construction and

knowledge building. Learning involves the construction of information in the memory rather than the exact transmission of information. This is also emphasized by Jacobs, Gawe and Vakalisa (2000) in that cooperative learning is a way of teaching in which pupils work together to ensure that all members in their groups have learnt and understood the same content. Jacques (1991, p. 13) states that a group exists when there is a collection of people with a collective perception, needs, shared aims, interdependence and interaction. Group members have collective perceptions, same needs, shared aims, interaction and cohesiveness.

According to O'Sullivan, et al (1996, p.56) there is an overlap between the meanings of a team and a group. In this study the term group will also include the notion of a team. Learning groups such as those used in a classroom, tend to be a combination of work groups and teams (Nina and Brown, 2000, p. 4). Members are peers working together to acquire knowledge and skills and each member contributes. Small group discussion provides the opportunity for students not just to engage in discussions regarding the subject content but also to create a social 'family' to which they can belong and become identified with. It could be said therefore that an important function of group work in higher education is to enable students to know enough about themselves and about others and to enable them to work independently and yet co-operatively within a team. This depends primarily on how the educator uses group work. "Group work is a form of socialisation in which the teacher allows his pupils to work towards common objectives in groups, the intention being that they will influence each other for the good and learn both for and from each other" (Avenant, 1990, p. 169).

Most job advertisements search for employees who have the ability to work in a team, but often in classrooms there is more individual work than team work. Preparing students to be able to work as an effective member of a team is an important skill required in most careers. The development of this skill could be achieved through group work projects in the classroom. As educators we need to blend the different methods of teaching (including group work) in our classroom so that students can acquire a variety of skills in order to meet employees' requirements. Becker (2005, p. 7) states that; "groups can be used to create a more efficient and effective working environment in an organization". However

it is a fact that group work comes with many problems, such as different behaviours from group members, personalities, communication and emotions. Students and lecturers need to be aware and be fully prepared for these problems so that they can deal with such problems as they are experienced during the process of working in groups.

2.8.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF GROUP WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

There are many changes that are currently taking place in South Africa at the moment from consolidation of the country as a democratic state, to developing and empowering community and society. “Groups therefore provide a space where people can meet interact, connect to others, be empowered and be healed” (Becker, 2005, p. 1).

Becker (2005, p. 11) further highlights the four reasons why it is important to encourage group work in South Africa as:

Meeting the challenges

South Africa as a country faces many challenges from lack of resources to natural disasters, changing roles and life transitions. Many professionals have found that the group method is important when it comes to inventing solutions to different problems that the country is currently facing. We need citizens who are able to work collaboratively with others and come up with solutions in order to enhance the lives of the people of South Africa and to develop a cohesive society.

Inner strengths of groups

The nature of the group itself provides a space for communication, sharing of information and for helping people to improve their life situations. It is important that people are able to form groups wherever they are to deal with issues affecting their particular community.

Promoting interpersonal connectedness

The individual is identified by a particular group which she or he belongs to, for example, family, nation, culture, religion etc. It is important that individuals are able to work and cooperate within their particular groups. This could minimise family problems and wars in this world.

Group approach and indigenous practice models

Group work is important for social development in South Africa. Cooperative learning/group work is particularly useful in the African context because it places emphasis on the value of the group. This is in line with the African global view that the group is more than the individuals making up the group, each person is defined by his or her relationship to the community or a group. This is expressed in the saying “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu” which means a person is a person through his/her interaction with other people (Van der Horst and McDonald, 1997, p. 136).

2.8.2 REASONS FOR USING GROUP WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Reynolds (1994, p. 25) categorises the reasons for using group work in teaching as: motivational, educational and ideological. Using group work in higher education is motivational in that students learn more when they are also involved in the learning process and enjoying themselves. The educational category means that people can learn from each other as well as from teachers; knowledge can also be taken as a social process. Ideological means learning in groups helps develop individuals to be able to live and work participatively and to sustain a society based on those ideals. The importance of cooperative learning is also emphasized by Johnson and Johnson (1992) as cited by Jacobs et al., (2000) in that without cooperation among individuals no group, no family, no organization and no school would be able to exist. In cooperative learning, learners are responsible for learning and for helping others to learn. Learning is effective when it is also a social experience (Levin, 2005). Another benefit that one receives from working in groups is that group work gives a student a wider

appreciation of learning. Students learn to link what they have learnt with more understanding, in other words, deep learning takes place.

Most of the literature concentrates on: tips on how to manage groups, tips for students on how to cope with working on a group project as well as the evaluation of group presentations. To mention a few educators who have experimented with group work in their own disciplines: Sanders (2000) did a study at the former Technikon Natal to promote cooperative learning to English I students. This research proved that students learnt better and were more excited about learning. My study differs from this in that it is targeting first year Office Management and Technology students in the classroom whereas Sanders had to get students to go to the working world as well.

Another study conducted by Mahabeer (1993) looked at using group work as a method of teaching poetry in which it was also found that students benefited from group work in all other areas of life, for example, communication skills, as well as life skills. Van Rheede et al. (2004) investigated whether “group work in higher education is a mismanaged evil or a potential good” (pg. 131). The results showed that students were positively inclined towards group work and had constructive views regarding the nature of group work as a learning mode. The present study looked at the use of group work in Business Administration I with particular reference to finding the perceptions of the staff and students about this teaching method.

2.8.3 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH GROUP WORK

The most common problem with assigning students group projects or with implementing any change is that there will always be resistance. People fear change, they do not want to be moved from their comfort zones. Whilst group work is exciting it offers benefits such as motivation, increased academic performance and develops good citizens of the country. It can however also raise a number of problems such as anxiety from staff and students, as well as other members not participating. “Many students report that they hate working in groups and/or that they have had no experience working in a group. Some report that they prefer to work independently because it is too frustrating and time

consuming to try to work with others” (Brown, 2000, p. 2). Other problems associated with group work include issues of privacy, trust, lack of direction as to what the group is expected to do and why is expected to do things that way as well as discomfort about values, beliefs of other members (Reynolds, 1994). Van Rheede et al., (2004, p. 139) states that a lecturer needs to be aware of his/her students’ perceptions regarding group work. Another problem is group work activities tend to consume precious class time and can lead to discipline problems in schools (Nunan and Lamb 1996). Group work can also be a problem if students do not understand the expectations of a lecturer. It is important that these be clearly explained at the beginning of the process. Although the use of group work promises many benefits, there could be barriers which could hinder the introduction of any change of teaching method in the classroom.

The study aims to contribute to possible ways of implementing the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 in South Africa which is “intended to link learning to the demands of the world of work” (Cronjé, Du Toit, Marais and Motlata, 2004, p. 248). Students must work together in order to gain knowledge and skills, they must do more than just listen; they must also be involved in obtaining knowledge. This study was aimed at promoting active learning, since active learning involvement is necessary for real learning to occur (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p. 2). However educators wanting to implement group work are often faced with a challenge because they have to deal with resistance from staff and students. More often people fear change, when you try and introduce something new they resist and want to stick to their old methods. Lecturers could also be faced with other problems such as large student numbers in their classrooms therefore it could be difficult to carefully monitor all the groups. The other problem could be the fact that systems within the institution do not allow for this type of training, for example, lack of facilities which support this type of learning. These are also some of the problems that are explored in this study and which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter four.

2.9 BARRIERS TO CHANGE

It is only natural that people become resistant when change is introduced. There will be resistance from students and resistance from staff. Bonwell and Eison (1991, p. 53) identified the common barriers to change amongst staff members as:

The professional setting in which faculty work tends to be stable:

Lecturers become too comfortable in their “comfort zones” of lecturing methods that they have been using for the past X number of years. They do not want to change just because they have always done things that way. In my practice I always hear the words; “This is how we do it in this subject ever since the department started.”

A professor’s sense of professional definition tends to resist change:

Lecturers’ roles in higher education are composed of three areas: teaching, research, and service. There is not much recognition and rewards for teaching over research. The effect of this is that most lecturers do not make the effort to improve their teaching.

The feedback circle in the classroom tends to be stable (that is, students and faculty share consistent expectations about each other’s roles in the classroom):

Lecturers and students have different expectations in the classroom. Students expect to be taught by lecturers; as a result they will feel uncomfortable when lecturers start introducing other teaching methods. Lecturers will then not be motivated to introduce such teaching methods due to the students’, reactions.

Trying something new arouses inevitable feelings of discomfort or anxiety.

Lecturers do not want to let go of control and ownership of knowledge, if they introduce student centred learning they are scared that their jobs will be less important as students will be doing most of the work. Lecturers also feel that it is their responsibility to cover the syllabus. On the other hand students also feel uncomfortable when they are asked to work with others for the first time.

Faculty can become self-enchanted as they think aloud and lecture:

Due to large student numbers in various faculties, lecturers cannot find the time to concentrate on what students do; some sit and read newspapers whilst the lecturer is busy lecturing. Students seldom pay attention, unless the lecturer mentions that what she/he is currently teaching will be covered in the examination, then they start to listen carefully.

Faculty see few incentives to change (that is, deviation from established methods invites risk but offers relatively few rewards):

There are no rewards in higher education for effective teaching. Whether you use the same method year after year or whether you try and be as creative as possible, other staff members will discourage you by saying; “we do not get paid extra to do extra work” as group work requires a lot of time for preparation and planning at the beginning of a project.

2.10 CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed indicates that lecture dominated methods are still widely used in higher education. Lecturers need to embrace and be aware of the changes which are currently taking place in higher education. They need to shift to a situation whereby students are given a chance to construct their own learning thereby promoting active learning. Lecturers need to ensure that the teaching

methods that they use promote deep learning and not surface learning which is in line with Outcomes Based Education.

Group work is widely used in different disciplines, but it does not seem to have been properly researched in Business Administration I. Despite all the problems associated with group work, it is worth pursuing as it promises many benefits in the classroom environment and to the society at large.

Chapter three will discuss the methods used in the study to gather data together with reasons why that particular method was used.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: ACTION RESEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses why an action research approach was used for the study. It also describes the instruments that were used with reasons for the choices selected. The implementation of the group work project over the two cycles will also be discussed. To introduce group work in Business Administration I was new, so I wanted to experiment to see if group work was an effective method of teaching and learning this particular subject.

3.2 DEFINITION OF ACTION RESEARCH

Day, Elliot, Somekh, and Winter, (2002, p. 27) define action research as a process of enquiry and reflection carried out by individuals to study their own practice in order to improve it. This definition ties in with what the aim of the study was: to plan and introduce a new teaching method in my own practice, reflect on it, re-introduce it with changes as identified previously in order to improve teaching and learning in Business Administration I. Action research differs from traditional forms of educational research in the degree to which it involves critical practice, improvement, participation and the actual environment or situation of practice (Light et al., 2001, p. 227). It is a “process of systematic reflection, enquiry and action carried out by individuals about their own professional practice,” (Frost, 2002, p. 25). It is aimed at finding a problem, trying to solve it, with the main objective being to improve practice in some way or another.

Action research can be used in a variety of areas:

- Teaching methods – replacing a traditional method by a discovery method
- Learning strategies – adopting an integrated approach to learning in preference to a single style of teaching and learning.
- Evaluative procedures – improving one's method of continuous assessment
- Attitudes and values- encouraging more positive attitudes to work, or modify pupil's value systems with regard to some aspect of life
- Continuing professional development of teachers – improving teaching skills developing new methods of learning, increasing powers of analysis of heightening self-awareness.
- Management and control – the gradual introduction of the techniques of behavior modification.
- Administration – increasing some aspect of the administrative side of the school life.

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p. 226).

According to Kember (2000, p. 24) action research is portrayed as a cyclical or spiral process involving steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The action research cycle is never- ending; it starts all over again and again and again, it is an ongoing research. Figure 3.1 is a diagram outlining the cyclical nature of the action research project.

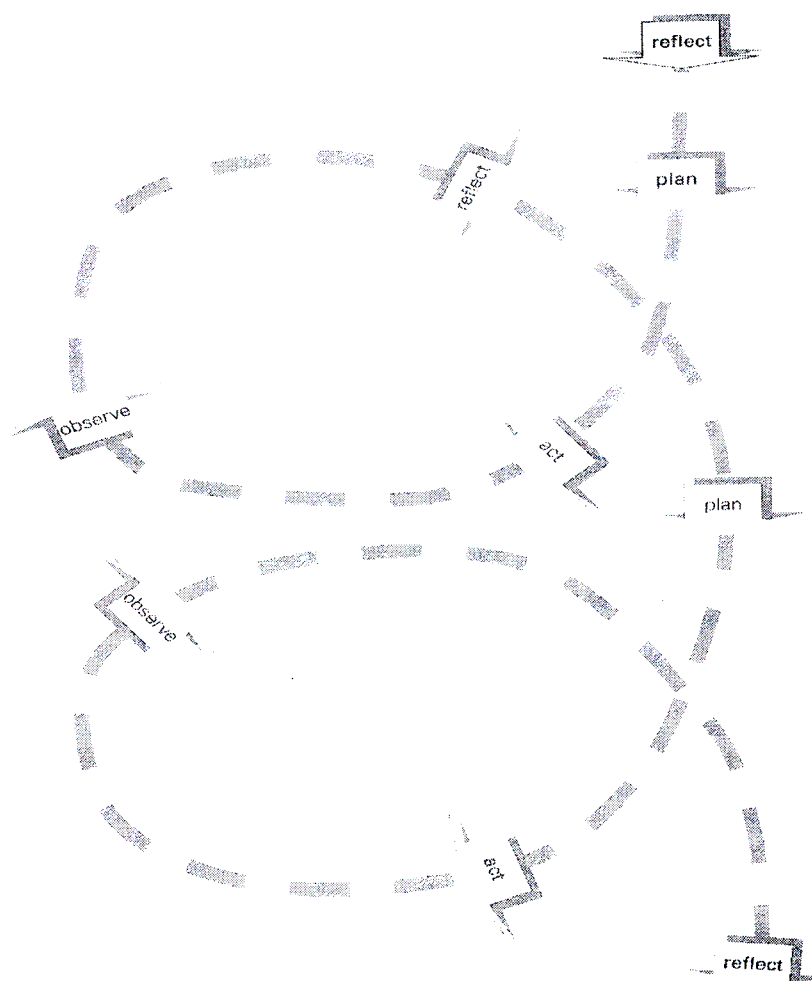


Figure 3.1 The cyclical nature of action research

(Source: Kember, 2000, p. 26)

Action research is an approach which has proved to be particularly attractive to educators because of its practical problem solving emphasis, (Bell, 1999, p. 10). Areas where action research is normally used include supplementing traditional teaching methods by a discovery method (which is what this study is aiming to achieve), learning strategies and improving methods of continuous assessment, (Cohen and Manion, 1980, p. 194). This blends with the definition of action research by Zuber Skerrit (1992, p. 23) where she defines action research as “the search by Higher Education teachers themselves for solutions to problems in student learning and the testing of these solutions through evaluation, reflection and review of the solutions found”.

Action research gives educators a chance for improvement and justification of their choices. It is usually initiated by two questions: Where can I improve the quality of my teaching here? What is happening here? These are the questions that I had in mind before implementing the group work project in my own classroom. I wanted to investigate if there was a possibility of improving the quality of teaching and learning in Business Administration I.

There is a lot of emphasis on teachers/educators to be ‘reflective practitioners’ who continuously engage in the study of their own practice and develop their own theories arising from that practice (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). To me it was very interesting how I came across this term “action research”. As a first time researcher in education, I had a vague idea that I wanted to implement a project with my students, identify areas of improvement, implement those improvements and evaluate again. I had no idea that there was actually a term for this ‘thing’ that I wanted to do!

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research took a form of a case study, which started as a mini project, it then became informed practice which was carried out over a period of three years. “The goal of a case study is to put in place an inquiry in which both researchers and educators can reflect upon particular instances of educational practice” (Freeboy, 2003, p. 81). Examples of case studies include a clique, a class, a school and a community. “It provides unique examples of real people in real situations” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 181) In this instance, the case is the Business Administration I class at the Durban University of Technology Riverside Campus. The study took place in the field of Office Management and Technology at the Durban University of Technology, Riverside Campus, where training is given to students studying towards a diploma in Office Management and Technology. The study took a form of the two cycle action research project which started in 2003.

I implemented a group work project for the first time with students registered for the subject Business Administration I in 2003. The process was evaluated at the end of the implementation of the project and recommendations were made for future implementation from students' responses to questionnaires and from my own observations. "A case study is more than a story or description of an event or state. As in all research, evidence is collected systematically, the relationship between variables is studied and the study is methodically planned" (Bell, 1999, p. 10)

The project was again implemented in 2004 with another group of students but within the same subject as the previous year. Improvements were made on the areas identified the previous year.

The year 2005 provided an opportunity to look back over time and examine the findings obtained in the first and second cycle. In this particular year, I looked at the long term implications of exposing students to group work projects with particular reference to their learning. I also sent out questionnaires to lecturers who lecture the same subject on the Durban Campus.

The sample size was:

- All 60 (sixty) students registered for the subject Business Administration I in 2003.
- All 60 (sixty) students registered for the subject Business Administration I in 2004.
- A convenience sample of 9 (nine) students (out of 40) registered for Business Administration III in 2005 (who had originally been part of the 2003 cohort). These students were invited to participate in this study and they were told that only 10 (ten) students would be interviewed therefore it worked on the first ten students who indicated their interest to participate.
- Three lecturers who lecture Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology, Durban Campus.

The students who were selected to participate in the study in 2003 and those who participated in 2004 were chosen because they would have been exposed to both individual and group work in that particular year. The nine students from the original 2003 group were invited to participate in the study in 2005 because they were part of the original 2003 respondents. I wanted to check whether their perceptions of group work had changed over the years. The lecturers' perceptions of group work were important in this study because in the Business Administration I study guide one of the methods to be used when lecturing the subject was group work. (see Appendix A). My problem was that this method of teaching had never been used at the Durban University of Technology. I wanted to explore students' and lecturers' reactions on the use of group work as a teaching method.

The main focus of the study was observing students' reactions to working in groups, obtaining their experiences and perceptions in my own classroom. The study aimed at finding out whether there were any problems that arose from group work as a teaching method and what effect group work had on teaching and learning Business Administration I. Lecturers provided a slightly different perspective on the introduction of group work and indicated how they thought it would benefit the students.

The study took the form of both Quantitative and Qualitative research. Quantitative methods were used to compare students' test results before and after the implementation of the project for descriptive purposes. Test class averages were compared before and after the implementation of the group work project in the first cycle and again in the second cycle. Quantitative research assumes that the world can be measured and that numbers accurately capture the probability of truth about something. Qualitative research assumes that in order to understand the world we need to focus on contexts (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p. 29). Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2004, p. 3) also echoed this, in that in qualitative research "we want to find out not only what happens but also how it happens and importantly why it happens the way it does"

Qualitative research was used to obtain students and lecturers' perceptions of group work. I felt that this would be an effective way to gather students' and lecturers' experiences and perceptions. "Case studies incorporate the full range of instruments from questionnaires to observations" (Anderson, 1990, p. 161).

3.4 METHODS USED IN THE STUDY

In this study the methods used to collect data were:

a) **Participant observations** during the implementation of the group work project in 2003 and again in 2004.

b) **Questionnaires to students** after the implementation of the group work project in 2003 and again in 2004.

c) **Focus group interview** with students who studied Business Administration I in 2003 who at that time were studying Business Administration III.

d) **Questionnaire to lecturers** who lecture the same subject at the Durban University of Technology, Durban Campus.

The research tools used in the study to collect data from lecturers and students are provided at the end of this document as Appendices D, E, and F.

3.4.1 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

Qualitative researchers go directly to that particular setting which they are interested in to observe and collect their data. They spend time being in a school, sitting in a classroom and directly observing and interviewing individuals as they continue with their daily routines (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 380). Winberg (1997, p. 42) states that qualitative methods allow researchers to stay close to the 'real' world. Such methods ensure a close fit between the data and what people actually say and

do. By observing people in their everyday lives, listening to them talk what is on their minds as a researcher, you are able to observe their reaction and experiences regarding that particular topic being researched.

I used participant observation to observe students from the first day I told them that we were going to start a group work project for the first time in Business Administration I. I did not use any structured observation schedule for this because I wanted to put my observations on paper as they happened, describing exactly how I felt and thought at that particular time. I was making notes to myself during the process as I wanted to observe problems experienced by students whilst working in groups and reflect on what was happening to students at the beginning of the group work project and what was happening whilst they were working in groups. However, looking back now, I noticed that it is difficult to observe your own classroom because you must be a lecturer and a researcher. I had to facilitate and evaluate presentations so that at the end of the presentation I was in a position to stimulate discussions with students regarding that particular topic discussed by presenters. I also had to give feedback on the presentation itself so that the next group to present would learn the do's and don'ts of presenting. Due to the roles that I had to fulfill in the classroom, I did not take as many notes as I intended. I got too involved in the evaluation and monitoring of the presentations and, therefore, did not concentrate on observing as I originally planned. On the contrary if I prepared an interview schedule, I would then observe only those 'anticipated behaviours' listed on the schedule and might miss other important issues.

In future I will prepare an observation schedule to keep me focused in my observations and still be open to any other interesting unanticipated observations that I may come across. Other problems associated with observations are that bias can be introduced in the data, students may feel intimidated and it is also time consuming. (Cohen and Manion, 1980). To deal with these problems I used other methods as well to obtain data. These were questionnaires to staff and students, as well as the focus group interview.

3.4.2 QUESTIONNAIRES

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005, p. 166) states that the basic objective of a questionnaire is to obtain facts and opinions about a phenomenon.

Questionnaires tend to be more reliable as they can be anonymous as compared to other methods of collecting data. Respondents feel free to write down their responses on paper without the researcher knowing their identities, therefore questionnaires provide a “safe” environment for respondents. They do not feel pressurized to say ‘what they think the interviewer wants to hear’ as is the case with interviews.

Questionnaires are a way of obtaining information whereby respondents use pen and paper to write their responses. They encourage greater honesty as compared to interviews because some people may feel uncomfortable discussing a particular topic face to face. Questionnaires are also more economical than interviews in terms of time and money. The advantages of questionnaires are that they can be mailed or given to large numbers of people at the same time. (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 113). I decided to use self-administered questionnaires to obtain perceptions of group work as a teaching method from the students and lecturers. De Vos et al., (2005, p. 168) describes self-administered questionnaires as questionnaires handed to the respondent, who completes it on his own, but the researcher is available in case problems are experienced.

An open ended questionnaire was given to students involved in the first cycle (2003). Advantages of using open ended questionnaires are that they allow more freedom of response, it is easier to construct and it also permits a follow-up by interview, (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 351). This open ended questionnaire was used to obtain students’ perceptions of group work after they were given a chance to work in groups. The same questionnaire was again given to students who were involved in the second cycle (2004) after they had worked in groups; they were then asked to write down their own experiences. Students enjoyed the opportunity to write down what they liked and what they did not like about a particular teaching method. Most

of the time, the student's 'voice' is not taken into consideration in our teaching. As lecturers we tend to teach the way we want to teach whether students are happy with it or not.

Lastly there was another open ended questionnaire given to lecturers who lecture the same subject at the Durban Campus. The questionnaire given to lecturers was short and easy to accommodate lecturer's busy schedules. I did not give lecturers their questionnaires during a departmental meeting as originally planned, this was due to the fact that after most of the departmental meetings, the lecturers are usually rushing to go and lecture. I then decided to e-mail the questionnaire requesting them to fill it in their own time and send back to me. The aim of the questionnaire was to find the lecturers perceptions of using group work as a teaching method.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993, p. 350) state that the disadvantages of using open ended questionnaires are that they are hard to analyse, and interpret since there are so many different kinds of responses received. This is also because of the quantity of the data that the researcher receives from respondents. I also experienced difficulty analysing 120 open ended questionnaires from students and two open ended responses from lecturers. Coming up with common themes becomes a problem as all these 120 students had different experiences on group work. Another disadvantage of using open ended questionnaires is that the questions and responses are subject to misinterpretation. To overcome this I used a focus group interview as well asking similar questions that were on the questionnaire. The most common problem associated with questionnaires is that some respondents may not return the questionnaire. To limit this, students were given a questionnaire during class time so that they could return it at the end of the lesson after they had filled it in. Questionnaires are often filled in hurriedly without respondents giving too much in the answers. Students were given sufficient time in class to think carefully and then put their thoughts on paper by means of filling in a questionnaire.

3.4.3 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

I did not want to use observations and questionnaires only as a method of obtaining data. I wanted to hear student's experiences on group work from their own voices. Interviews are an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy or verify the impressions he or she has gained through observations. (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993, p. 385). I used a semi-structured focus group interview in 2005 to find out from students who were part of the first cycle in 2003 who were at that time doing their final year towards their qualification, whether their perceptions of group work had changed through the years and how being exposed to group work in first year, affected their learning in the three years that they had been at the Institution. De Vos et al., (2005, p. 292) states that the guided interview is ideal for obtaining comprehensive and comparable data. Focus group interviews are group interviews which are means of better understanding how people feel or think about an issue, product or service. They are used to obtain information in a shorter period of time than in individual interviews (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 300).

I decided to conduct these interviews myself, although I had originally planned to use an outside facilitator. I felt that students would be more comfortable talking to me as they had been doing in their three years since they came to study at our institution. I felt that they would be more reserved talking to a stranger and this could affect the richness of my data. However the limitation for this could be students might not feel free to provide negative feedback on group work experience to the person who had in fact implemented it. I prepared a framework of questions as a guide for my focus group interview so that I could focus on that particular area (see Appendix E). A questionnaire written to guide interviews is called an interview schedule or guide (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 296). Although there were structured questions prepared before the interview, the participants were told at the beginning of the interview to 'speak their minds'. I did not want to restrict the discussion to issues raised in the questions only. I wanted to use a focus group interview method with third year students because they were more comfortable in expressing themselves verbally as compared

to first years. Ten (out of 40) third year students were invited to participate in this study and nine came. The aim was to allow these students to speak freely and say whatever they wanted to say about group work. This interview was conducted on campus using open ended questions as a guide. Students were informed that their responses would remain confidential and they were also given the option to withdraw from the study at any time when they felt uncomfortable, but all nine were interested to participate in the study.

Before the interview I had to ensure that the room to be used was well cleaned and the air conditioner was working properly so that students would feel comfortable. I also had to check that the air conditioner was not too loud in such a way that it would affect the use of a tape recorder. I was thoroughly prepared for the interview as I also had to test the tape recorder to check if it was working properly.

At the beginning of the interview I fully explained the purpose of the interview and encouraged students to speak freely. The interview was taped using a tape recorder, I was also taking notes during the interview to ensure that I obtained as much information as possible from the students. This helped me a lot when categorizing the students' responses, I was able to identify which student said what as it would have been difficult to try and identify the students' voices from the tape recorder only. Some of the questions asked during the interview were similar to questions asked in the two cycles of this study. My aim was to check the quality of the data for triangulation purposes and also to check that students perceptions of group work had changed or had not changed over the years. At the end of the interview, students were given chocolates as a token of appreciation for participating in the study. Data collected from the focus group interview was documented and the information was captured on Microsoft Word programme. The data was then coded into different categories that emerge from the responses.

3.5 VALIDITY AND ETHICAL ISSUES

When it comes to observations, questionnaires and interviews, issues of validity are more to do with external validity. According to De Vos et al., (2005, p 160) “validity refers to the degree in which an instrument is doing what it is intended to do”. I wanted to be a participant observer in order for me to be able to get inside the situation and observe how students handled working in groups. The questionnaire was a suitable instrument to use because I wanted to obtain students and lecturers’ perceptions of group work. I was then able to obtain each respondent’s feelings and frustrations at the time. It was appropriate to use a focus group with third year student, as they are more mature and had better communication skills compared to the first years. Although at first, they were scared to talk I was able to make them feel relaxed by going around the table and asking each person to say what was in his/her mind. After that they opened up freely, as they felt that all of them were invited to speak and their opinions would be taken seriously.

Informed consent was obtained from the participants who were staff and students involved in the study in 2003, 2004 and again in 2005 (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000; Mouton, 2001). Participants were also assured that the information that they gave would be treated confidentially. McNamee and Bridges (2002, p. 44) emphasize that confidentiality gives protection to the participants that their responses would not be used for any other purposes except for the purpose of the study. The findings obtained from the data collected will be discussed in the next chapter.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the action research approach was justified with relative definitions and explanations from the literature. The instruments used in this study to gather information were fully explained together with the reasons for using such instruments. The advantages and disadvantages of observations, questionnaires and focus groups were discussed on experience and on literature. The findings obtained from the data collected will be discussed in Chapter four.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings of the study together with the students' reflections and my own reflections over the two cycles of this action research project. The two cycles will be explained in more detail using the headings indicated on figure 3.1 in the previous chapter describing the cyclical nature of action research. Results obtained from the observations, students questionnaires and interviews will be presented and discussed with the aim of answering the critical questions raised earlier in the present study, namely:

What is the effect of group work on students and their learning?

What are the perceptions of the students on using group work in Business Administration I?

What are the lecturer's perceptions on using group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology?

What are the perceived benefits of using group work as a teaching method?

Lankshear and Knobel (2004, p. 33) state that analysis is about finding what is 'in' the data that we collect that seems to be important to us. Interpreting is about what it 'implies' or means for that particular problem underpinning the study. The analysis was done using the data obtained from my own observations, questionnaires given to students and lecturers, focus group interviews as well as from analyzing the students' test results before and after the implementation of the group work project.

At this point I must mention that it was not easy to conduct an action research for a 50 % thesis given the short period of time that one has to complete the qualification. I am proud and honored because I managed to do an action research in this short space of time. This has been a very rewarding experience for me, to be able to start a project from nothing and to be able to start what has never been done before in this particular subject at the Durban University of Technology. I have been through different phases as an educator and as a researcher. Although this research has been carried out in a period of four years including the final writing of the thesis, I feel I have grown in all areas of my academic career.

Data was collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The analysis was conducted on the data obtained from classroom observations, questionnaires given to students and lecturers as well as the responses obtained from the focus group interview. The student's test results before and after the implementation of the group work project were analysed in the first cycle in 2003 and again in the second cycle in 2004.

The data obtained from students' and lecturers' questionnaires was analysed and classified into categories emerging from the responses. Taped responses obtained from the focus group interview were transcribed and incorporated in the different categories that emerged from questionnaires, as there were observable similarities in the responses obtained from questionnaires and responses from the focus group interview.

The aim of the study was investigate the introduction of group work in Business Administration I. It was hoped that it would encourage them make more meaning of the content that needs to be covered and not just present to them the material to be memorized. I had to explore ways of introducing group work to students and evaluate how it would be received by students and lecturers involved in Business Administration I. The question I had in mind was; will introducing group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I improve teaching and learning of this particular subject?

The findings will be divided into four parts. The first part (under section numbered 4.2) will deal with the analyses of students' tests results before (Test 1) and after (Test 2) the implementation of the group work project in 2003 and again in 2004. The second part (under section 4.3) will explain the findings arising from my own observations as a participant observer in this action research project. The third part (under section numbered 4.4) will describe the action research process that took place in this study together with the students' perceptions gathered from the questionnaires as well as from the focus group interview. The fourth part (under section 4.5) will provide lecturers' perceptions as obtained from questionnaires given to lecturers. I did not use Excel to analyse the qualitative data as originally intended as I felt that the data obtained was manageable enough and will be better described through Microsoft Word.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' RESULTS

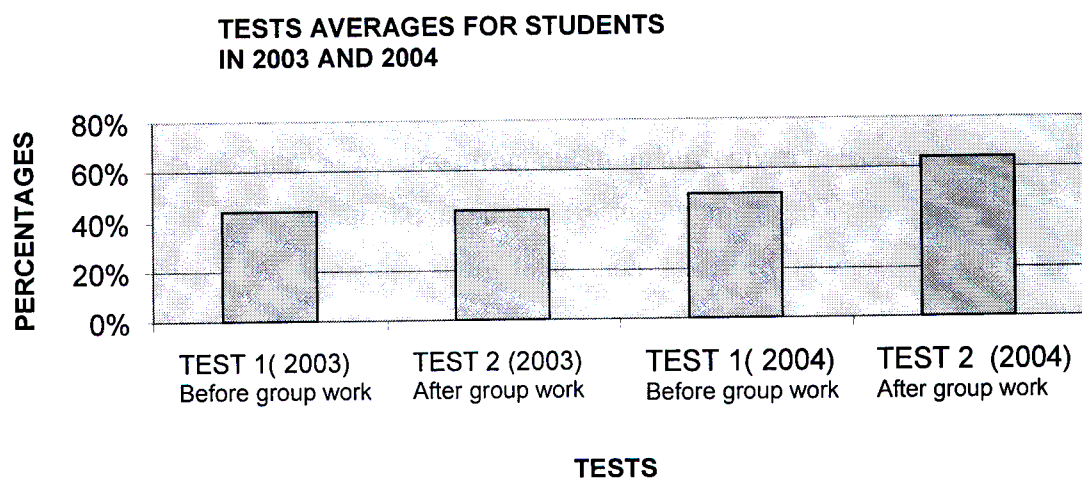


Figure 4.1: Quantitative analysis of students' results before and after the implementation of the group work project.

The graph above shows an improvement in students' test results from test 1 (before students worked in groups) to test 2 (after students worked in groups) in 2004. It can be noted there was no difference in marks in 2003 even though students wrote test 2

after they had been exposed to working in groups. This could be associated with the fact that the process was implemented for the first time (with a few drawbacks here and there) so it had no effect on students' test results. This does not however imply that students had not benefited in other ways, but in a manner which may not be actually measured using test results. The analysis of test results may not be the most appropriate instrument to measure the effect of group work on student learning. This will have to be taken further and be researched at a deeper level with the main focus on group work and test results to determine which factors affect student performance. As educators, we need to be careful how we make claims regarding students' marks; the claims need to be grounded on proper research. When implementing the group work project in the second cycle with the changes as identified in the first cycle, it then became evident that students were learning better as there was a noticeable improvement of students' marks in the second cycle, which means that group work can have an effect on student learning provided that the process is well structured and clearly communicated to students. This is important for us as lecturers to carefully plan our group work activities. It should not be a matter of putting students together with no proper plan on the whole process and the assessment thereof. The results showed that students remembered the material dealt with in groups more, compared to the material dealt with individually. They were using a deep approach to learning instead of using a surface approach.

When interpreting these results, I was also aware of the other factors which might have influenced the students' results in the first cycle. In these two cycles different students were used to analyse the data. We can take into consideration things like the students' previous experience of working in groups as well as the group cohesion, which can have a negative effect on the results.

4.3 MY OWN OBSERVATIONS

Observations were conducted everyday as from the beginning of the group work process. At first I noticed that students were nervous and worried when I told them that they would be working in groups, they were not certain if they would enjoy the process since they were used to working as individuals. Students were also not

certain whether they were going to be able to find the information on their own because they were so used to relying on lecturers giving them all the information needed in this particular subject. One group told me: “Miss, we have never heard of the word Ergonomics, how are we supposed to do a presentation on something we have never heard of?” The effects of this might be the fact that students were used to being “spoon-fed” by lecturers, when they were told to look for information on their own they started to feel uncomfortable. They did not have the confidence in themselves to trust that they can take charge of their own learning.

Although my classes were dominated by females, when students were dividing themselves into different groups I found that some were males only or females only. I did not disturb this because I wanted students to be as comfortable as possible in their groups and to enjoy the process.

It is important to understand what happens when working in a group in the absence of members of the other sex (Reynolds, 1994, p. 127).

Unfortunately the first ‘males only’ group to conduct their presentation was not ready on the day of the presentation. I had to postpone the presentation. This was the first and the last time that something like this happened; all the other groups were ready for their presentations in time.

As the presentations started taking place, students started to feel at ease. They understood the process and were also looking forward to listening to their classmates present that particular topic in class. All groups were challenged to give a presentation of a particular topic that they were researching, in order to get their classmates involved in each others work and to achieve a broad perspective on the topic (Van der Horst and McDonald, 1997, p. 133). I noticed that the presentations went very well, students were interested, learning, asking questions, stimulating interesting debates and taking notes as well. They also informed some of third year students in the department, that they were doing presentations for the first time in Business Administration I. Four third year students came to me and asked for permission to sit and listen to the presentations. This motivated me a lot to notice

that what I was implementing was interesting and fun. The problems that I observed from the presentations were that some students were just reading to their classmates. They were not thoroughly prepared for the presentations. Another problem was that there was a lack of respect amongst students, for example, if their class mates asked the presenter a question, the presenter would be rude when responding to that question. My reflections on these observations will be discussed together with the students' reflections under section 4.4.

4.4 THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

The action research process that took place in this study, will be discussed using the headings taken from figure 3.1 in the previous chapter.

4.4.1 FIRST CYCLE 2003

REFLECTION

This was the initial phase in this study. I was at a point of reflecting on what I was doing as a lecturer in my own classroom when teaching Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology, Riverside Campus. "If we wish our practice to continuously move on we will have to be continuous reflectors" (Fry et al., 1999, p. 208). I was concerned that I was only using one method of teaching to teach my students day after day which was more of a transmission mode. Therefore students only absorb what we tell them as lecturers in this subject at the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses. They are not given a chance to discover other ways of finding information except relying on lecturers. We are still using theory one or transmission mode in our teaching (Ramsden, 1992, 2003).

There were a number of indicators of a more instrumental or surface engagement. Students were always resistant to participating in class discussions as they were only interested in what the lecturer told them. The assessment method was based on individual tests and individual assignments only. Another indicator for me was a constant demand from industry for team work skills. The final demand was also coming from the government, for higher education institutions to incorporate the critical cross field outcomes into the curriculum. I wanted to introduce a teaching

method that would help students to learn a range of skills and also serve as another form of assessment.

PLAN

In order for me to address the problems stated above. I then planned to introduce a method of teaching and assessment that would encourage student participation in the learning process as well as at the same time meeting the demands of the workplace. The aim was to adopt a paradigm shift in our teaching (Campbell and Smith, 1997) and to shift teaching from theory one, which is more of a transmission mode to theory three which encourages teaching and learning to be collaborative (Ramsden, 1992, 2003). Secondly, I wanted to encourage students to use a deep approach to learning not a surface approach (Biggs, 1999). Lastly I wanted to enable students to construct their own learning and thus promote active learning and constructivism.

ACT AND OBSERVE

I decided to implement the group work project at the beginning of the second term with students registered for Business Administration I in 2003. I decided to implement this project in the second semester because I wanted students to learn more about each other. I did not implement this in the first semester because I felt that students needed time to get to know each other in class at the beginning of the year, since they all came from different backgrounds and different schools.

At the beginning of the second semester students were given a visual problem to solve as a group (see Appendix C), whereby they were expected to come up with solutions to the problem at hand. The purpose of this exercise was to serve as an ice breaker so that students could start communicating in groups rather than tackling problems individually. "The purpose of the ice breaker is to make the transition to the group smoother" (Brown, 2000, p. 35). I then asked them to share with the rest of the class what they had observed whilst working in groups, the good and the bad points. The icebreaker helped a lot as I observed that more students were starting to talk and laugh together whereas before they used to be quiet and shy. I then gave them a lecture on group dynamics, to help students to understand the different stages that groups could undergo. This was to prepare students to work in groups.

“Preparing students to work in groups can mean providing specific training on group work, such training will develop an understanding that all groups go through a number of stages” (Fry et al., 1999, p. 99).

Students were then asked to go and think about the method that they would prefer when being divided into groups, whether groups were to be divided by myself as a lecturer or students to choose their own groups. I wanted students to enjoy the process therefore I wanted them to be comfortable with the people with whom they would be working. Students then decided to divide themselves into groups. However, what I observed was that it was difficult for students who did not have friends in class to find a group, therefore I gave them more time to decide which group they wanted to join. Students were told that they would be required to hold proper meetings in preparation for their presentations and submit these minutes of meetings after their class presentation.

It is stated in the critical cross field outcomes that students should be able to:

- work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organization and community
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- collect, analyse, organize and critically evaluate information
- communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentations (Pretorious, 1998, p. 29).

By giving students the group work project I wanted them to learn a range of skills as identified in the critical cross field outcomes named above. Students were then given topics to go and research and then do class presentations on that particular topic given to them. They were left to research on their own. The only guidance that was given to them was by means of discussing the criteria to be used when evaluating presentations.

The topics that were given to students were in line with the Business Administration I syllabus. This was to help me finish the syllabus whilst using different methods of teaching. Groups were just told to go and research a particular topic, do class

presentations and then the topic would be discussed in more detail in class. The topics were: Group 1 - Records Management which involves managing records in an organization and, the different filing systems used in organizations. Group 2 - E-mail used in the business environment, how to get connected to e-mail as well as the do's and don'ts when receiving and sending e-mails (e-mail etiquette). Group 3- Customer service, how customers should be treated when they visit the organisation and how office workers should deal with different customers who phone the organization. Group 4 - Cell phones and service providers. This type of technology has taken the world by storm; students need to be aware of the different cell phone devices and service providers which can help them do their work better. They also need to know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable when using cell phones in the business world. Group 5 - The Internet, students need to know what internet is, what is needed to get connected and the different internet service providers in South Africa. Group 6- Ergonomics, concerned with the way the work environment is arranged to suit the needs of the individuals not the other way around. Students need to know how to arrange the workstations, for example, desk, chair etc to suit the individual. Group 7 - Petty Cash, Administrators are often asked to handle and manage petty cash, it is important that students know what petty cash is, when it is used, how it is used in different organizations. Group 8 – had to research the latest technology. As students studying a diploma in Office Management and Technology they need to be aware of the latest office technology that is available to make them more productive as administrators and to help them find better ways of doing things using latest technology. Group 9 - had to choose their own topic related to administration and computers. This group decided to give a presentation on the four functions of management; planning, leading, controlling and organizing. Whilst students were doing the presentations I was evaluating the presentations together with one member from each group. Guidance given on the presentations was in the form of discussing the evaluation form to be used when evaluating presentations (see Appendix G). This was discussed with the whole class so that they would understand what areas would be evaluated.

After the presentations, students were then given a chance to ask questions to presenters or to the lecturer regarding that particular topic. This was then followed by a discussion around that particular topic after each presentation. I noticed that students were participating more in class during discussions and they were also thinking whilst they learnt, compared to a traditional lecture method whereby they would just take down the notes presented to them by a lecturer.

The next stage was that the group had to submit the final assignment based on the information that they were presenting. Lastly, a questionnaire was given to students to evaluate the whole process.

REFLECTION

The findings in the first cycle indicated that students need to be given more support when asked to work in groups as it is sometimes difficult for them to look for information on their own. Problems identified by students included things such as the fact that it was difficult for them to meet in groups because they live at different places. Another problem was that they were finding it difficult to complete the evaluation form used to evaluate presentations, they felt that the form was too complicated and not clear whether they should tick or allocate marks. Although this was explained to them at the beginning of the process, they were still confused. Another major problem was that some group members were not contributing to the research that had to be done. As a result some students had to do more work whilst others were 'loafing'. Despite these problems experienced in the first cycle, students enjoyed working in groups and I also learnt more about reflection in action research as I had to come up with solutions to the problems identified in the first cycle.

Table 4.1 categorizes the students' perceptions of the benefits of working in groups as identified by students who were part of the first cycle in 2003. These categories emerged from the student's responses to the open ended questionnaire (Appendix D) given to them at the end of the group work process. Although this was a class of 60 students, when the questionnaire was given there were only 44 students in class (N= 44). This could be associated with the fact that the questionnaire was given to students towards the end of the term. As a result most students were preparing to go

to their homes; especially those who lived in residences therefore this affected the attendance.

ACADEMIC	SOCIAL	PEER LEARNING
Easy and interesting topics given to us because they were also part of the syllabus. (n=8)	I like the fact that we were given a chance to divide ourselves into groups. We worked hard because we were working with the people we knew. (n= 10)	Easy to find information when working with others. (n=3)
This was a good learning experience very exciting. (n=1)	Improved good relationships between students.(n= 8)	Different people working together, you get to know your classmates well. (n=4)
We were given a chance to share ideas. (n = 5)	We all respected each other (n= 2)	
Students are more productive when working in a group. (n= 1)	At first, I was scared in my group, but I fitted in very well. (n= 1))	
	We learnt to communicate with different race groups. (n= 1)	

Table 4.1 Students' good experiences of group work (2003)

ACADEMIC

These statements show that students enjoyed the fact that they were given topics which were also part of the syllabus therefore they found the experience very exciting. "The topics given to us were good and nice because they were topics in our syllabus" (sic). Students were happy being given a chance to share ideas with other students as it was evident to them that they became more productive when they worked in groups. This tells us that when students are given a chance to construct their own learning they learn better. Which is also links with the notion of active learning, in that students should do more than just listen, they should read, write, discuss or be engaged in solving problems (Bonwell and Eison, 1991, p. iii). However as educators we need to be sure that students are supported and well monitored when working in groups.

SOCIAL

Giving students the opportunity to decide who they wanted to work with in their groups encouraged them to work harder because they knew the people they were working with “We felt less pressure because we knew each other very well” (sic). This improved good relationships between students, as they were given a chance to spend more time with their classmates whilst learning as well “Relationship was great in our group we learnt to respect each other and worked well as a group” (sic). However letting students select their own group members could in fact encourage students to take advantage of personal relationships, knowing that their friends could cover for them. Some students were scared at first, but they fitted into the group as they started to work together. This shows that some people do not easily socialize and interact with others, they need time to adapt to the new environment. Students were able to communicate across different race groups in the classroom which is very important for their future employment and developing good citizens of the country (Becker, 2005). Office Managers and Administrators need to be sensitive and understand different cultures which exist and be able to work with them.

PEER LEARNING

Students experienced the benefit of looking for information themselves. They were taking responsibility for their own learning. They were not struggling on their own, they had their friends to work with so they found the process much easier. As they were given the opportunity to work closely and interact with their classmates, they got to know and understand each other very well. First year students enter the higher education system from different backgrounds and having different experiences, values and beliefs. This implies that it is important to promote interpersonal relationships in our classrooms, as students learn to express themselves when they are with other people. “I like group work because you get to work with other people and respect their opinions” (sic) In this group work project they also learnt more about the evaluation process as they were also part of the evaluation of presentations. This means that they were wearing different ‘hats’ during the process; by being students, researchers, presenters, as well as evaluators.

The following is a table describing student's negative experiences on group work in 2003. Due to the responses that I obtained from the students I had to use different categories for categorizing the negative experiences than those used for positive experiences.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS	PROBLEMS WITH THE GROUP WORK PROCESS	STUDENT PROBLEMS
<p>Difficult to meet we live at different places. (n= 5)</p> <p>Students always rushing to catch a bus to go home, which is only at 2:00 in the afternoon (n=4)</p> <p>Difficult to get books at the library. (n= 5)</p>	<p>Difficult to complete the form used to evaluate presentations. (n=6)</p> <p>Females and males should work together, must not have same sex groups. (n=1)</p> <p>People not knowing what they are talking about during presentations or too shy. (n= 5)</p> <p>Some students giving high marks to their friends only, during presentation evaluations. (n=4)</p> <p>Some students not attending some presentations, you feel as if your information is not important. (n=1)</p>	<p>Some members not doing the research. (n= 8)</p> <p>Students choosing their friends only to work with. (n=5)</p>

Table 4.2 Students' bad experiences of group work (2003)

INSTITUTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

The problem of having students who stay at different places has an impact on their ability to work in groups. This is important for us as educators to understand our students better. Sometimes we tend to forget that there could be other factors outside the classroom which can affect students' performance. We need to be aware that most of the students rely on public transport only, but the public transport system has other problems. Students were finding it hard to arrange meetings as they stayed at

different places. The problem was further caused by the fact that the campus is situated away from town. Students relied on the university bus to transport them from campus to town therefore it was difficult to arrange meetings as most people rush to catch a bus at 2:00 p.m. Although the library orientation was organised at the beginning of the year, students found it difficult to get books which were relevant to their research. This could mean that the library orientation programme is not effective enough or there are not enough books at the library for this particular discipline. This means that we as lecturers, have not yet assured that there are enough books at the library for the subject Business Administration I.

PROBLEMS WITH THE GROUP WORK PROCESS

Problems identified by students which were associated with the group work process in the first cycle, included things such as the problem with completing the evaluation form used to evaluate presentations. One student was also concerned about the fact that some groups were made of females only or males only, they were not mixed.

During the presentations, some students were not thoroughly prepared for the presentation, they were too shy to present their material or just reading their notes without any understanding "I did not like it when other students stood in front of the class and just read to us" (sic). Asking one member per group to evaluate the presentation together with the lecturer raised problems of validity in these marks, as students felt that they were not fairly evaluated by their classmates who were giving high marks to people that they are close to "Some students gave their friends high marks even though their presentation was boring" (sic). Some students raised concerns that they felt as if their presentation was not important if the attendance was low on that particular day.

STUDENT PROBLEMS

The main problem with giving students a group work project was that some do not want to do any work, they only want others to do the work for them. “Other group members were lazy and did not want to do any work” (sic). This becomes a problem when the group will be getting the same mark as some students feel that others will do the work for them and they will still get a good mark. As educators we need to be aware of how we set up the group, and help in ensuring that students have equal roles to play within the group. Another problem was that students who did not have friends in the class were finding it difficult to find a group that they can belong to as other students were choosing their friends only to work with. A solution to this could be that educators can be responsible for dividing groups for example using the class register.

4.4.2 SECOND CYCLE 2004

PLAN

To try and address some of the problems identified in the first cycle I decided to implement the project again in 2004 with another group of students, but within the same subject.

ACT AND OBSERVE

It can be seen from Table 4.2 on the previous page that most students were worried about other members not doing the research, as well as the problem with completing the evaluation form used in the first cycle (see Appendix G). These were the first two problems that I attempted to solve first. To solve the problem of other students not participating in doing research, I then decided to ask students to evaluate each others' contribution to the group by means of filling in a peer evaluation form (see Appendix J). I also implemented a process whereby students would allocate a symbol to that particular presenter by means of a show of hands (see Appendix I) on how the symbols would be allocated.

This process was implemented as in the first cycle making the following changes:

- Only the lecturer to evaluate presentations by means of completing a simpler evaluation form. I also felt that the form used previously was complicated (see Appendix H for a simpler criteria for evaluating presentations). Students to evaluate presentations by allocating a grade to that particular speaker (see Appendix I). I wanted to use a method that was more informal as compared to filling in an evaluation form that was used in the previous year. I had to ask the presenters to leave the classroom for a few minutes whilst the whole class graded the presentation by a show of hands. I also wanted students to have fun whilst they evaluated each other. This worked because more students were participating in the evaluation process, therefore, the group had to prepare well for the presentations knowing exactly that the whole class would be evaluating them at the end.
- The first group meeting was to be held in class to address two problems; firstly the problem of students living at different places therefore it was difficult for students to meet as a group and secondly so that I could check the first draft of minutes taken at that meeting and give proper guidance on how to write minutes correctly. This change was because of the quality of the minutes that students submitted in the first cycle. They did not understand what minutes were and what the important points to be included when typing minutes, were. The solution of having the first meeting in class, helped as I was able to give guidance on how to hold formal meetings and take minutes of a meeting.
- Students to be given a checklist (see Appendix K) at the beginning of a process so that they would be clear about what was expected of them. This was because when students were submitting the final assignment copy as a group, I noticed that it was not a group effort. Some assignments were typed in different font styles and sizes, some groups did not include all the information and pictures that they showed the audience during the presentations. Having a checklist made them aware at the beginning of the

process that they would have to compile a final document as a group. The quality of the assignments received was improved as compared to the previous year whereby students were only told by the lecturer at the beginning of the process that they would be required to submit a final copy.

- Students to assess each others contribution to the group by means of filling in the peer assessment evaluation form (Appendix J). This was to address the problem of other members not contributing to the search of information. The evaluation form did not help much as most students still complained of loafing members in the second cycle and during the focus group interview. What could help as one student suggested; could be assigning sub topics to individuals so that they would all know that they had been given responsibility.

REFLECT

The second cycle worked better, I was more experienced as a facilitator in facilitating the group work project. Students were excited with the method used to evaluate the presentations in the second cycle. This method was more fun and informal, all students were involved in evaluating a particular presenter; it was not a matter of choosing one member per group to evaluate presentations, as was done in the first cycle. Due to my involvement in the second cycle and due to the fact that I did not lecture second years in 2004 I did not have sufficient time to monitor students who were part of the first cycle to identify if they were better in linking the two major subjects and if they were better in linking what they have learnt in first year to what they were learning in their second year. The following table, outlines the students' (N=47) good experiences that were experienced in 2004 obtained from a questionnaire given in 2004 which was similar to the one given in 2003.

ACADEMIC	SOCIAL	PEER LEARNING
<p>Share information, share ideas and knowledge. (n=7)</p> <p>Assessment of presentations was fair, we got what we deserve. (n=5)</p> <p>I like groups of six because we could further divide ourselves into two and allocate tasks (n=2)</p> <p>It is a way to get the work done faster and enjoyable. (n=2)</p> <p>Group presentation is the best oral presentation I have ever done. Knowing that your friends are standing next to you whilst you are presenting makes you not to be shy. (n=3)</p> <p>Group work taught me how important it is to listen to each other, taught me time management and to be organized. (n=2)</p> <p>Everything in this process was really helping students a lot, especially it was easier to learn the accounting section. (n=3)</p> <p>We must do presentations more often, it helps you not to be shy. (n=1)</p> <p>This was a very good experience for me it was my first time working in groups (n=4)</p> <p>It was interesting to look for information on your own without having to wait for the lecturer each time to give you information. (n=4)</p>	<p>Working as a group is very interesting (n=2)</p> <p>Gives us a chance to understand each others weak and strong points. (n=3)</p> <p>Brought students closer. (n=3)</p> <p>We learn to communicate with other people. (n=3)</p>	<p>We learned to listen to each others views. (n=1)</p> <p>Everyone had to contribute and cooperate. (n=1)</p> <p>Worked well together. (n=2)</p>

Table 4.3 Students' good experiences of group work (2004)

In this cycle, the students' responses fitted more on the academic category, this could be associated with the improvement in the students marks as identified in 4.1.

ACADEMIC

The students who were part of the second cycle also enjoyed being given the chance to share ideas, information and knowledge "We shared ideas, gained knowledge, interesting way of understanding a topic" (sic). They viewed group presentation as the best oral presentation, as they felt comfortable presenting with their friends standing next to them. Students enjoyed doing presentations, as they became more confident. They felt that the method used to assess presentations in the second cycle was fair and they got what they deserved depending on how prepared they were for the presentations. "Assessment of presentations – democracy method" (sic). Whilst concentrating on preparing well for the presentations, students also understood the subject content better because they were involved in the learning process and were learning more "The assessment method challenged each student to work hard" (sic). This implies that students learn better when they are involved in the learning process which is in line with active learning and constructivism. This could be associated with the improvement in student's results, as indicated in Figure 4.1. They also felt that working in groups is the easiest way to get the work done faster and is enjoyable.

Students liked the idea of working in groups of six because they could further divide themselves into pairs, do research and come back and report to the group. "Groups of six were great because we had sub groups of two" (sic).

Amongst a range of skills that they acquired from working in groups, the most important ones were listening skills, time management skills and they learnt to be organized. They found it very helpful to learn the Accounting section of the syllabus when they worked in groups. This is very important as we take students in our department who have never done Accounting before therefore they tend to struggle on their own. Encouraging group work helped those students to understand the section better. Students found it interesting to look for information on their own

without having to wait for the lecturer each time to spoon feed them with information.

The following are problems experienced by students who were exposed to group work in the second cycle of this action research study:

INSTITUTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS	PROBLEMS WITH THE GROUP WORK PROCESS	STUDENTS PROBLEMS
Kicked out of the library because we were told we were making a noise. (n=1)	<p>Some members not attending group work meetings. (n=10)</p> <p>Members not contributing. (n=15)</p> <p>Some members felt offended when others were rectifying their mistakes. (n=5)</p> <p>Some take that advantage of being friends and expect others to do the work for them (n=4)</p> <p>Some students giving you low marks during the voting process just because they don't like you. Not because you made a bad presentation. (n=5)</p>	<p>Being asked questions by other students after the presentations. (n=2)</p> <p>Not knowing how much to research, when to stop. (n=2)</p> <p>Not sure about how to structure the presentation. (n=2)</p> <p>A person in a group to be given a subtopic to avoid laziness(n=1)</p>

Table 4.4 Students' bad experiences of working in groups (2004)

INSTITUTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS

Students involved in the second cycle of this study found that they had no place to sit and discuss as a group. The only place that they could use was the library but there were not enough discussion rooms at the library and therefore when they were doing their discussion, one student mentions that they were told to leave the library because they were making a lot of noise. This indicates that we need to look at ways in which we view learning. We are still stuck in the old system which views learning as an individual process. Discussion venues are still a major problem especially in winter,

most of the time students do not have a place to sit, they wait outside the corridors to attend their next lecture as stipulated in their time table.

STUDENT PROBLEMS

There were no limitations given to students in terms of how much information they needed to research. Some felt frustrated not knowing when to stop, how much will be enough for their presentation and assignment. As a suggestion students felt that it will be better if they can further be given a sub topic to research as individuals. But I feel that they need to fully engage in the project as a group, even dividing the roles and responsibilities should be done within a group. They also had problems deciding how to structure the presentation. Students were not happy being asked questions by other students after the presentation.

PROBLEMS WITH THE GROUP WORK PROCESS

The issue of members not contributing to the research process became a main problem in the second cycle as well. "Members not attending group meetings and not contributing to the group" (sic). This was despite the fact that students were told that at the end of the process they will be evaluating each other's contribution to the group. Some students will take advantage of being friends and expect others to do the work for them. There was also a problem during groups meetings, whereby other students felt offended when their mistakes were corrected by other students, there was lack of respect as they were all equal. Although the method used to evaluate presentations in the second cycle was more simpler and challenging, students felt that some students were not fair in the voting process; they gave their friends high grades just because they are friends and not because they had a great presentation.

4.5 FINDINGS OBTAINED FROM THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

At this time, I wanted to reflect on the whole process of exposing students to group work in the two cycles. The second reflection then included asking third year students who were part of the 2003 group to again reflect on their exposure to group work in the three years of their studies. This was also to identify whether these students still held the same perceptions of group work as they did in 2003. Involving lecturers aimed at giving other lecturers the opportunity to reflect on what they currently lectured and considered the possibility of introducing group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I. There was no evidence of resistance from staff who participated in this study, they were willing to introduce group work the following year, provided that we come up with ways of dealing with problems associated with group work such as limited resources, loafing members, structure of lecture theatres etc. The following table outlines the students' good experiences of group work as obtained during the focus group interview which took place in October 2005 (see Appendix E). For the interview schedule there were 9 respondents (N=9). I felt that it was not relevant to give a number to each response, as all nine responses were captured from all nine participants.

ACADEMIC	SOCIAL	PEER LEARNING
<p>The idea of choosing the people to work with is great.</p> <p>We were given responsibility of our own learning.</p> <p>Given a chance to be able make decisions.</p> <p>You get more information when you look for it yourself unlike taking only what your lecturer tells you.</p> <p>You get a better understanding of that topic when you struggle to get information.</p> <p>We get to share ideas and information.</p> <p>You get experience of being a leader</p>	<p>Groups worked as teams.</p> <p>Improved communication between classmates</p>	<p>You get help form other students when you do not understand the topic.</p>

Table 4.5 Students' good experiences of group work (2005 focus group interview)

The table above confirms how students felt about group work in general and how they benefited in the process. A number of benefits raised in the first and second cycle were also confirmed in the focus group. This included things such as taking responsibility for their own learning (active learning), being given a chance to look for information themselves instead of waiting for a lecturer (constructivism). This is also in line with the critical cross-field outcomes that we are expected to incorporate in our teaching. Although students benefited a lot from working in groups, however the problems associated with group work were still concerns to students even after three years, especially the problem of other group members not participating. Table 4.6 on the next page outlines the problems associated with group work, raised during the focus group interview.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS	PROBLEMS WITH THE GROUP WORK PROCESS	STUDENTS PROBLEMS
Not enough books at the library, therefore it is difficult to find information	Other students who do not want to work cooperatively with others. (7 students) Some of the members were not contributing.	I did not like to get a group with girls only and being the only boy as they tend to give you more work.

Table 4.6 Problems with group work obtained from the focus group interview 2005

Other things that came out of the focus group interview included things such as the fact that in Information Administration III, students were asked to do presentations and they did these presentations with confidence because they were given a chance to practice in Business Administration I. Another important point that was raised during the focus group interview was that students were given a chance to decide which group they wanted to join. This was debated during the focus group interview, as the majority of the students felt that in the workplace you do not have the option to choose who your colleagues would be. You have to just learn to work with different people from different backgrounds, therefore, students should not be given the option to choose. This was in line with comments that I obtained from industry as indicated earlier in this study, in that “Administrators are the back bone of any company therefore it is important that they are trained as good team players” (Company A telephonic survey) This would have to be explored further in the next circles to follow, whether students worked well in groups that they chose themselves or in those allocated by the lecturer.

4.6 DISCUSSION OF STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF GROUPWORK AS OBTAINED IN 2003, 2004 AND 2005

The perceptions of the students were gathered after students had experienced what it felt like to work in groups. The data collected from the questionnaires as well as from the focus group interview was firstly classified in to good and bad experiences. The good experiences were further classified into three broad categories namely; the effects of group work on students academically, socially and how it affects peer learning. The bad experiences were classified into different three categories:

Institutional problems, problems associated with the way the process was handled and lastly problems amongst students. When analyzing the data, the bad experiences raised by students brought up different categories to the ones used to categorise the positive comments.

Van Rheede, Van Oudtshoorn & Hay (2004, p. 139) state that “introducing group work offers a challenge to the lecturer to move students out of their comfort zones and into the group learning experience”. The lecturer needs to be thoroughly aware of his/her students’ perceptions regarding group work.

The tables on the previous pages arose from the data collected from students studied in the first cycle 2003, second cycle 2004 and finally during the focus group interview, it was evident that students enjoyed working in groups. They held positive views about group learning. They were excited about being given the opportunity to search for information themselves. One student wrote:

“Long leave group work long leave” (sic).

It is evident that using group work had many benefits academically; it leads to a better understanding of the subject content which is associated with the fact that students share ideas and learn from each other and also develops critical thinking skills. This means that active learning promotes deep learning because students are given a chance to critically engage with the material therefore deep learning takes place. When students are given a chance to work in groups they learn in that supportive nature, being supported by their peers. They do not have to struggle on their own or rely on lecturers only. This then helps the department to incorporate the critical cross field outcomes into the curriculum.

These findings also indicate that first year students coming from different backgrounds need to be given the opportunity to get to know one another. Group work also develops independence from lecturers as they explore a variety of ways of obtaining information which is in line with active learning. Other benefits include improving communication skills and developing the skill of being able to work with different people which is important in building future employees and citizens of the

country.

The results further showed that we as educators, tend to limit our students in terms of what they can do and we assume that they enjoy being 'spoon fed' with information. As research shows that most educators still use traditional lecture dominated methods in universities (Bonwell & Eison 1991, p.iii) It was evident that if students are given a chance to search for information as a group, they actually enjoy that challenge as it gives them the chance to develop critical thinking skills "You get more information when you look for it yourself unlike taking only what the lecturer tells you" (Student D, focus group interview) Students were excited to be given that freedom to take responsibility for their own learning and to learn from others. This is in line with Ramsden's (1992, 2003) theory three as discussed in chapter two in this dissertation, which implies that students learn better when the learning process is taken as "two sides of the coin", in this theory students and lecturers are both collaborating and both contributing to the learning process. At the moment students are not using a deep approach to learning, as a result of the teaching method that we currently use.

These results obtained from the students' perceptions link to the notion of constructivism whereby students are given a chance to construct their own learning. Which all leads to active learning and promoting student centred learning. When students are encouraged to work in groups whilst learning, they develop close friendships with their classmates "We learn to communicate with each other" (n = 3 students who participated in the second cycle). They learn that in life you come across different people and you must get to understand their strong and weak points. This will therefore mean that as a department, we are incorporating the critical cross field outcomes in our teaching and at the same time responding to industry needs.

The positive comments received from students were also supported by a noted improvement in the students' test results in 2004 as indicated in the graph above. These were not the same students, but it was within the same subject. I had the experience of facilitating a group work project in the first cycle, as a result I was able to do it better in the second cycle, by making adjustments obtained from the first cycle. The improvement on the test results was an indication that there is a strong

possibility that students understood the material better when they were given a chance to search and discuss the content on their own. It was evident that students were using a deep approach to learning rather than using a surface approach as I observed in class that they understood the subject more and were participating in class discussions.

From the focus group interview, students mentioned that they were given presentations to do in Information Administration III . They confidently did these presentations because of the fact that they were given a chance to practice in Business Administration I. Another important point that was raised during the focus group interview was the fact that students were given a chance to decide which group they wanted to join. This was debated during the focus group interview as the majority of students felt that in the workplace you did not have the option to choose who your colleagues would be. You had to just learn to work with different people from different backgrounds therefore students should not be given the option to choose who they want to work with in their group.

There were a range of issues that students raised as concerns and problems associated with group work. These were analysed, and categorised according to whether there were institutional problems, problems associated with the actual process of working in groups and problems between students.

Looking across the problems associated with group work as noted in previous tables, students experienced problems such as not getting enough books at the library to having difficulty organizing a place to meet as there were not enough discussion rooms at the library. These are important problems that we as lecturers need to be aware of when trying to introduce group work projects as they can have an effect on the performance of a group. It also places a challenge to the institution to re-look at ways of providing facilities that promote collaboration between students. We need to bear in mind that learning does not take place in the classroom only, it can take place anywhere anytime without the teacher/lecturer being physically there to feed students with information.

The most common problems that were raised from the questionnaires and from the focus group interview were problems to do with group members. Issues such as respect during meetings, lack of focus from other members, not coming for meetings and the most common one was other members not participating in the group were shared. Although the peer evaluation attempted to solve this problem, however, it was evident that students were still complaining about other members not participating in the group work process. Other groups experienced the problem of one member dominating the group or other students or asking one person to do all the work. This was the case with a group of females and one male. Although implementing a method whereby students evaluated each others' contributions attempting to solve this problem, it was evident that students were still complaining about other members not participating in the group work process. This means that we need to consider possibilities of incorporating more about morals, ethics, respect and attitudes in our teaching. I was also concerned about issues of resistance from my Durban colleagues, whether they were going to accept or reject the idea of introducing group work in Business Administration I. It was important for me to hear their views as well as because we teach and assess the same way in both Pietermaritzburg and Durban Campuses.

4.7 LECTURER'S RESPONSES TO A QUESTIONNAIRE

A questionnaire (Appendix F) was given to three lecturers who lecture in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology, Durban campus. The aim of this questionnaire was to obtain a response to the question:

What are the lecturer's perceptions on using group work in Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology?

I was only able to obtain two questionnaire responses out of the three, as originally intended, but fortunately I was able to obtain the comments from lecturer 3 when she heard that I was doing research on group work. Her comments were:

"Cynthia, we are happy that you are doing a study on group work. It came out during experiential

training visits last year, that our students (Durban campus) cannot express themselves clearly, and this is because they do not do group work and presentations”.

(Lecturer 3, personal communication, 2006-06-21 Business Administration I subject Committee meeting).

This was very motivating for me as it was supporting what I also discovered from this study when students started to participate more in the classroom, after they have been exposed to group work. This will be an intrinsic motivation for most educators, knowing exactly that you will not just be presenting the material to students who will just absorb whatever you say, you will get students who can engage in to a more meaningful discussion in the classroom. This was also emphasized from the results of the mini survey that I conducted as a motivation for this study to companies that normally take our students for experiential learning that students who have been exposed to group work tend to adapt easily in the work environment.

Lecturers’ responses were analysed using the six barriers to change in the classroom as identified by Bonwell and Eison (1991, p. 53) these barriers were explained earlier in Chapter 2:

a) The professional setting in which departments work tend to be stable

For most subjects things are the way they are today because of the way they have always been. People enjoy stable work environments, they tend to do the same thing over and over again. Lecturers who lecture Business Administration I at the Durban campus have less than ten years experience as lecturers; they are still open to new ideas and as a result they were not against the implementation of group work in Business Administration I.

Lecturer 1: “I strongly agree with the idea of introducing group work. We can ask students to demonstrate their research/group skills by allowing them to discuss at least two sections in the syllabus before it is taught by the lecturer”.

Lecturer 2: “Personally I think would be a good idea but we have to come up with ways of how to

implement it and anticipate problems if any and the benefits of group work as this is an important skill which will help our students in day to day life and their careers after completing their studies.

b) A professor's sense of professional definition tends to resist change

University lecturers often have high teaching loads, the DUT is no exception. Lecturers sit with more than 25 periods a week and at the same time are expected to conduct and publish research as well. Lecturers are continuously complaining of the number of periods that they have on their time tables and as a result they resist change. However, the results showed that these lecturers were willing to introduce group work as a teaching method because of the benefits associated with this type of learning. They identified benefits such as cross cultural communication, sharing information and ideas, encouraging critical thinking. Introducing group work also had a positive effect in the classroom in that students felt that they were part of the learning process as they were asked to participate in a number of ways, unlike waiting for a lecturer just to present the material to them, day after day. These benefits were also raised in the literature and again from the students' perceptions.

c) The feedback circle in the classroom tends to be stable

Students normally respond to the teaching methods that they are used by lecturers. For example when the lecturer uses chalk and talk everyday, students will expect that same method everyday. The minute the lecturer introduces another method of teaching and learning, students will start to respond to the change in a negative way. From introducing group work in my own classroom in the two cycles, students were positive about the whole process. This means that it is very important how group work is defined and introduced so that students can welcome the change introduced by the lecturer.

d) Trying something new arouses inevitable feelings of discomfort or anxiety

More often lecturers do not want to let go of control and ownership of knowledge, if they introduce student centred learning they are scared that their jobs will be less important. This was not the case with lecturers in this study as they all felt that it is a good idea to introduce group work.

e) Faculty can become self-enhanced as they think aloud and lecture

Lecturers tend to direct students to concentrate on a particular section after setting a particular assessment. Therefore students immediately get the impression that they only need to study a particular section only and do not learn other important sections because of what the lecturer said on that particular day. Students sometimes lose concentration during lecture time, therefore it will be helpful to encourage group work so that they can meet and learn from each other

f) Lack of incentives for change

Since there are no rewards for innovative teaching, it becomes a problem for lecturers to move out of their comfort zones and try other methods of teaching. The responses showed these lecturers who participated in the study were willing to try out different methods of teaching as long as the students could learn better. The reward for introducing group work may not be in the form of a monetary incentive, but it was more of an intrinsic reward rather than extrinsic, in that lecturers and students can enjoy teaching and learning more in the classroom environment. The lecturer will have students who understand the subject content better and therefore they will be in a position to participate in class discussions or be able to ask questions since they would have been interrogating the material themselves. Given that there is little resistance from students and staff, it is then possible to expand this process into other cycles. The focus will be attempting to deal with problems experienced when students work in groups, and experiment with different options to see which one has

the potential to make the process more fun and meaningful.

g) Materials and equipment needed

Resources and materials available at institutions may not be fully ready to support this type of learning, for example Lecturer 2: mentioned the fact that: “the lecture theatres are designed in a sloppy fixed seating arrangement which does not promote group work”. I agree with this statement as students also mentioned that there are not enough discussion rooms available for them to work in groups.

Lecturers identified the following as benefits of using group work as a teaching method (I noted that these benefits mentioned by lecturers were also experienced by students):

Lecturer 1: “Students’ learn to work together, irrespective of cultural and personality differences. Learn responsibility and commitment to the group/others. A wealth of information can be gathered and shared because there is a combined and concerted effort”.

Lecturer 2: “It encourages students to work in small groups. Encourage students to express their ideas and opinions in class discussions. Encourages brainstorming. Improves students’ communication skills. Encourages critical thinking. Students develop a problem solving approach and apply it to a situation. Students develop skills in argument and defending their point of view and gain and in-depth knowledge of the subject (debate). It is a team-building tool. Learning can become active and goal oriented”.

The above statements tie in with the students questionnaire responses and what they said during the focus group interview about the benefits of group work. My own observations proved that students enjoyed working in groups and they were benefiting from it.

Problems identified by lecturers:

Lecturer 1: Some students contribute whilst others remain dormant/complacent and sponge/feed off the hard work of others complacent. But there can be ways to remedy this". This was also a common problem identified by students who participated in this study in the first cycle and again in the second cycle.

One lecturer mentioned the fact that; "We are not doing enough to incorporate the critical cross field outcomes in the department. We need to encourage group discussions in class, group work, group discussions and group work class exercises"

TO DATE

Arising from this research the need to encourage students to work in groups has been noted in the department. For the first time in 2006 at the beginning of a second term, students were given an assignment to do as a group. This was a decision taken by all lecturers involved in the lecturing of Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology in the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Campuses. Lecturers are happy with the idea of having a group assignment as it reduces the number of scripts that we have to mark towards the end of the year. The department uses a "poll marking" system whereby all lecturers involved in that particular subject split the marking of tests and assignment scripts for both Durban and Pietermaritzburg Campuses, across all classes (each lecturer does not mark his or her own scripts only). This puts pressure on lecturers as they have to deal with large volumes of marking assessment after assessment.

We have introduced the use of group work as an assessment method whereby all students are given the same topic to go and research about and are then expected to compile an assignment as a group on that particular topic that they were researching. Students are given a specific due date for the assignment and when the assignment is marked students receive the same mark in that particular group. This will have to be researched further in order to find out how students feel about the fact that they are

getting the same mark. Subject committee members will have to come up with ways of dealing with 'free-riders.'

4.8 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The main aim of the study was to explore the possibility of introducing group work as a teaching method as outlined in chapter one for effective teaching of Business Administration I. The results showed that in general students and lecturers held positive views on using group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I and they saw it as a good opportunity to improve friendship, communication, sharing of information and ideas as well as laying a foundation for life long learning which is important for the working world. This shows that there a big possibility for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning this particular subject. The improvement in test results proved that group work helps students to understand the content more, rather than trying to understand it on their own. Although there are institutional and membership problems associated with group work, using this type of teaching and assessment method has the potential to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Given that there is little resistance from students and staff, it is then possible to expand this process to come up with other ways of solving problems experienced whilst working in groups as identified by participants in this study. Chapter five provides recommendations for the next cycle and for anyone planning to make use of this teaching method.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to consolidate some of the findings that were discussed in chapter four, in order to make meaning of the data obtained from this study and from the literature and provide useful information to using group work for teaching of the subject Business Administration I at the Durban University of Technology and to any other interested parties. I believe that the information obtained from the study will help to promote effective teaching and learning.

This study arose because of the lecturer dominated method that was predominantly used to lecture the subject Business Administration I at the DUT. I wanted to investigate another method of teaching that could benefit the students in not learning only but in other areas of their lives and enable them to be better future employees and develop characteristics of being good citizens of the country.

The focus of the study was to hear the students' and lecturers' voices on the use of group work as a teaching method. The reason was the fact that this teaching method was never used in this particular subject and yet there was a need from the government as well as from the industry for people who are trained to work collaboratively with others. The data collected from students' and lecturers' perceptions of group work, focus group interviews, my own observations and from the literature, has enabled me to have a valuable insight of the use of group work in higher education, with particular reference to Business Administration I at the DUT. The data was collected with the aim of investigating a possible alternative teaching method other than the everyday used chalk and talk, lecture- dominated method with an attempt to make learning more fun, meaningful and enjoyable for students so that students can learn better using a deep approach to learning instead of a surface approach. For lecturers to also consider other methods of lecturing which are not the traditional chalk and talk. Introducing group work as a teaching method in Business

Administration I at the Durban University of Technology, Riverside Campus, provided the need for adopting a paradigm shift that is currently taking place in higher education in the teaching of this particular subject, to a situation whereby students take charge of their own learning and construct their own learning. The study proved that students enjoy being involved in the learning process which is the notion of active learning. They learn better through experience (Kolb 1984) and when they learn with understanding, deep learning takes place.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Before concluding and making recommendations arising from this study. I feel it is important that I acknowledge some limitations of this study. These are:

- The long time taken to collect and interpret data due to my lecturing load exacerbated by the fact that I did not take leave to do this research. I always had to 'squeeze' it in somehow in my busy schedule.
- Being a lecturer and a researcher in my own class room was another limitation, as students may have felt that I only needed to hear the good side about the group work process therefore they may have been uncomfortable to express their real feelings. I also had to play different roles which became difficult especially when conducting observations, as I had to be a researcher, at the same time expected to do my normal classroom duties as a lecturer.
- The use of unstructured observations was not easy as I often ended up facilitating presentations as a lecturer and not observing student's reactions. Using a more structured observation schedule could have been perhaps much better.
- Action research takes a long time therefore it limits the ability to gather and analyse data as one needs to wait for things to actually happen before proceeding further. The fact that this was an action research project, will help

me to do a longitudinal study. I can then be able to look at other issues that I was not able to interrogate further in this study. For example issues of gender and groups as well as how different types of students perform in groups.

- The findings in this study cannot be generalized but I hope that they resonate with others similar situations and therefore build a picture across a number of instances.

5.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of test results in the second cycle showed an improvement in students' performance after they had worked in groups as compared to working as individuals. The results indicated that group work can have a positive effect on student learning. In the first cycle there was no improvement in students' results which could be associated with the fact that the group work project was not well structured, and another reason could be the fact that this was another group of students who can have different circumstances as compared to the ones in the second cycle, therefore, group work had no effect in their learning. As educators we need to be careful when we make claims regarding student marks this needs to be researched at a deeper level. It also raises a question of whether group work is more effective for certain types of students and, if so, what types of students?

I had to reflect on what needed to be changed and make the necessary adjustments for re-implementation in the second cycle. It is recommended that lecturers planning to use group work use the action research principle of implementing, evaluating, reflecting and re-implementing until this type of teaching and learning works for all parties. The responsibility of making group work effective cannot be placed on the hands of the lecturers only. Students must also have a "say" on what they like and what they do not like. Within reasons we must be able to explain to them why are we doing what we are doing in the classroom.

From the observations it was noted that students become uncomfortable at the beginning with the concept of working in groups. With careful motivation and guidance they become more relaxed, start to enjoy the process and participate more in the discussions in class. When implementing a group work project, it is important to explain to students the whole process involved so that they can also know what is expected from them. It is also important to have systems in place to monitor the process. A checklist will serve as a valuable tool for students to keep track of what is expected from them and what is still to come.

It was evident that students benefit a lot from working in groups. They develop a range of skills that they will need in the business environment in order to be good South African citizens (Becker, 2005). We need South African citizens who are able to work together, respect one and another and acknowledge the diversity in this country. It was interesting to notice that the benefits experienced by students with regards to group work were also benefits noted in the literature. In future it will be interesting to look at the group membership in more detail and determine which factors contribute to the group performance taking into consideration things like gender, age, and previous friendships.

There were also long term implications of group work noted in this study. Students were more confident in doing their third year presentations due to training they had received in their first year. The other long term implication as mentioned in the focus group interview, was that students stayed as friends in those groups that they worked on in their first year of study. This means that when group work is introduced earlier, as soon as students enter the tertiary environment, it helps them to be more social in their academic years and beyond. The action research process is an ongoing process. I am interested in tracking these students in industry to see whether having exposure to group work prepared them well for future employment.

Lecturers also invited the possibility of using group work in this subject, their responses revealed interesting similarities on their perceptions of the benefits of group work with the benefits experienced by students who were given the chance to work in groups. Results revealed that although lecturers were aware of problems associated with group work such as the structure in most of the lecture venues as well as issues dealing with the actual definition of group work and “free-riders,” they were willing to discuss possible solutions to these problems. The results in this study showed that the department is not doing enough to incorporate the OBE approach of teaching and learning which should involve collaboration and learning and to incorporate the critical cross field outcomes into teaching. This could be achieved by introducing group work as one of the teaching methods in Business Administration I and not to use traditional methods only. There is also a curriculum problem in the department in that students only do group presentations in Information Administration III only and not in Information Administration II or Business Administration II. Exposing students to group work and individual work in all our subjects will enable them to learn a range of skills.

The study showed that there was scope for considering a variety of approaches to teaching of the subject Business Administration I, and group work could be one of the methods used. The findings showed that staff and students held positive perceptions on group work, and there were similarities in the benefits of using group work in education as identified by students, lecturers and the literature.

It can be said that introducing group work as a teaching method offers many benefits to students and will help them to learn better. The fact that it has a range of benefits, offers lecturers a ‘go ahead’ to experiment with their own classes and see what works well for that particular subject. As this is an ongoing action research cycle, in the future I am planning to involve students at the Durban campus as well so that they can also experience what group work is all about. I will also look at the assessment of group work projects in more detail as well as the effect of group membership in the group performance. The possibility of introducing electronically linked groups is another option as I have already designed a website for this particular subject.

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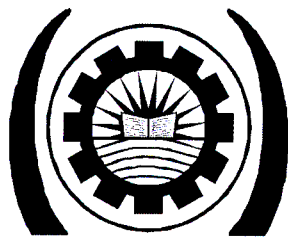
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APPENDIX A

**APPENDIX A: TWO PAGES TAKEN FROM THE BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION I STUDY GUIDE**



D U R B A N

UNIVERSITY *of*
TECHNOLOGY

FACULTY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

NATIONAL DIPLOMA: OFFICE MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

**BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION I
(BADM1002)**

LEARNER GUIDE – 2005

LECTURERS

DURBAN
MS N ROSS
MS K MOODLEY
MS PP GUMEDE

PIETERMARITZBURG
MS C ZONDI

6. CRITICAL (CROSS-FIELD) OUTCOMES

On completion of this course, learners should be able to:

- * Identify and solve problems in which responses show that responsible decisions, using critical and creative thinking, have been made.
- * Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
- * Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- * Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- * Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/written presentation.
- * Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

7. LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

- 7.1 **LECTURE:** The lecturer will outline and explain the main points of the lecture and the learners are expected to consult the relevant texts and compile their own notes.
- 7.2 **GROUP DISCUSSIONS:** The learners will be divided into groups and each group will be given topics for discussion and presentation.
- 7.3 **DEMONSTRATIONS:** Wherever possible demonstrations of equipment/facilities/procedures will be taken.
- 7.4 **GUEST SPEAKERS:** Where possible guest speakers will be invited to share their expertise on certain sections of the syllabus.

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B: RESPONSES FROM COMPANIES

TELEPHONIC SURVEY

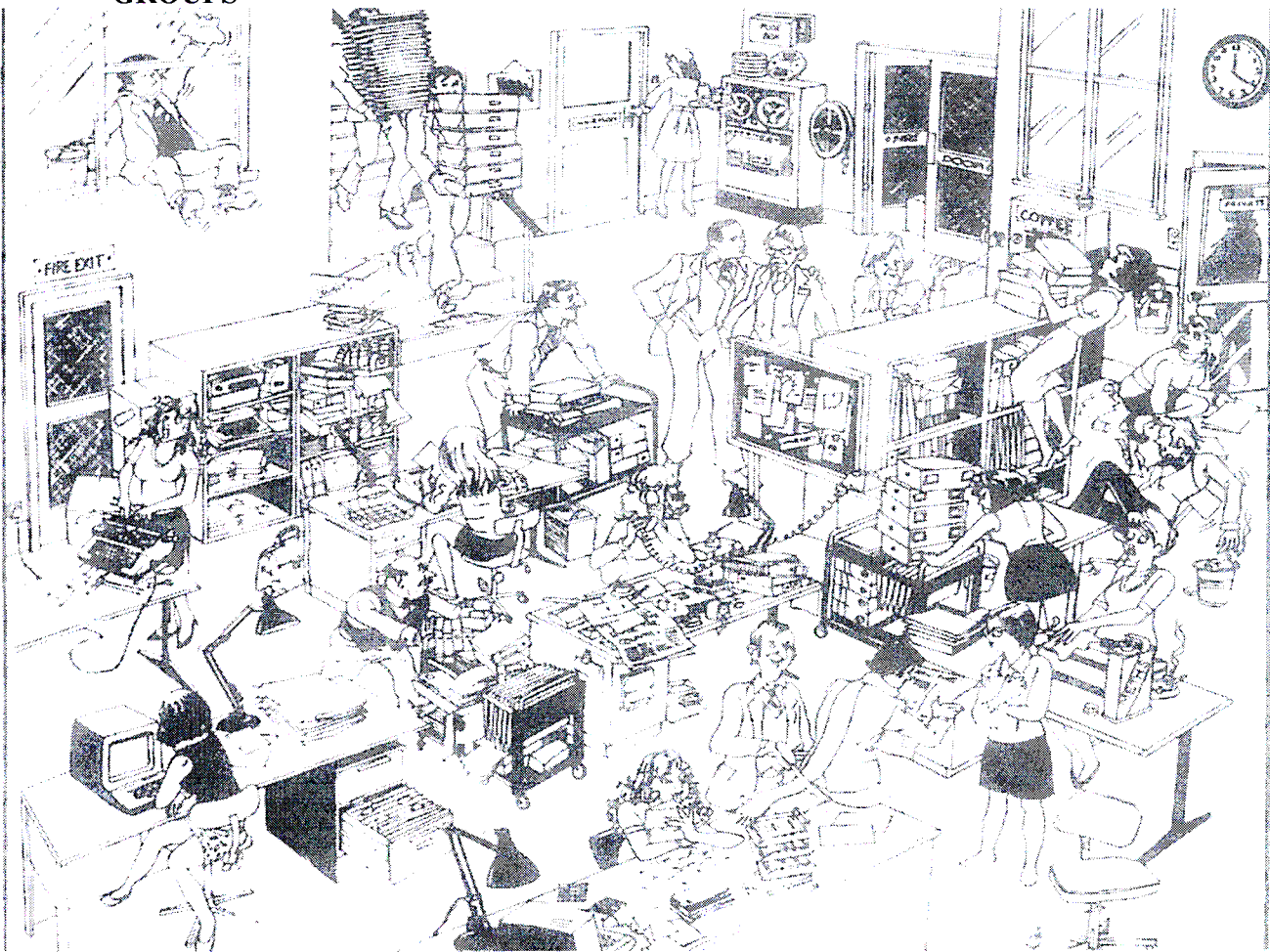
QUESTIONS	COMPANY A	COMPANY B	COMPANY C	COMPANY D	COMPANY E
What does team work mean to your organization?	Teamwork is crucial, the nature of or organization is such that people do have individual job descriptions but the Admin staff report to the Information section and to the Manager. We also need to take into consideration that some people are more reserved than others, because of their personality	Teamwork is when people work together with the understanding of the objectives of the company.	Without teamwork there is no objective. One section in this organization depends on the other. But also people should work together.	If someone is away on holiday, another person must take over and do the best they can to help fulfill the goals of the organization.	We define team work as people working together to set objectives and plans for the organization.
What do you expect from new employees having just finished their higher education and qualifications and now entering the	We must understand that it is a new environment for them. What I have noticed is that people who have been exposed to	Respect for other people. Good morals	To join in and do what has to be done. Sometimes people who come with higher education qualifications think they know	A graduate should be trained in all areas in order to cope well in the working world.	Exercise what they have learnt. Take initiative.

APPENDIX B: RESPONSES FROM COMPANIES

working world?	group work in their training tend to adapt easily and quicker than those who have never done group work before		everything and do not want to be told by experienced workers.		
In your own opinion, do you think it is important or not for Administrators or Office Managers to be trained as good team players?	Administration is the backbone of any organization. Administrators are always dealing with donors, customers etc. therefore it is important that they are trained to be able to work with other people	It is very important because they must have people skills.	No individual can arrive at a final product alone, teamwork is important. Administrators must say not say things like – this is not part of my job description therefore, I will not do it. They must be able to help with whatever needs to be done.	Absolutely important	It is important. Office Managers are dealing with more than one person, it is a strategic position.

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C: AN ICE BREAKER TO PREPARE STUDENTS TO WORK IN GROUPS



Discuss with five of your classmates if this is your dream work environment... If not, give reasons for your answer.

(Source: Foster 1994, p. 19)

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What did you like about this whole process of working in groups and why?

2. What is it that you did not like about the whole process? Why?

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

FOCUS GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

OCTOBER 2005 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The main reason why you were all invited to participate in this focus group interview, is because I am in the final stage of the research that I started in 2003 on group work. As third year students, you have been exposed to different teaching methods with different lecturers. For the purposes of this research we will only talk about group work which is what this study is about.

May I please request that you sign the circulating register. By signing this register you are agreeing to participate in the study and to make yourself available for any other information that might be needed from you. Please note that the information gathered in this interview will be used only for the purposes of this research and nothing else.

Try and think back and remember during your first year in 2003, when we did a group work project in Business Administration I. We are just going to do a follow up on that today. I will ask a few questions and I will be recording your answers on this tape recorder so that I can get as much information from this discussion. The discussion will not be limited to these questions only; you are welcome to say whatever you want to say about group work.

Please feel free to speak – just say anything that comes to your mind.

QUESTIONS:

1. On your first year 2003, you were exposed to group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I. I just want you as a person to tell me what you liked and what you did not like in the group work process.
2. Were you exposed to group work in Business Administration II? How you felt about that?
3. Did you do group work in Business Administration III? What are your feelings on that?
4. Would you say group work had any effect on your learning?
5. Did group work had any effect in your other areas of life? Give examples.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

APPENDIX F

APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE TO LECTURERS

1. In the Business Administration I Learner Guide (Page 7) under teaching methods, one of the teaching methods to be used in this subject is group work. As you are aware this has never been done year after year. In your opinion why is this?
2. What do you see as benefits of using group work as a teaching method?
3. What do you see as limitations of this type of teaching method?
4. Do you feel that in Business Administration I, we as lecturers are doing enough to incorporate the critical cross field outcomes? Please elaborate your answer.
5. What are your views about introducing group work as a teaching method in Business Administration I in 2006 second semester?

APPENDIX G

APPENDIX G

PRESENTATION EVALUATION FORM 2003

GROUP

Yes = 2, Sometimes, = 1, No = 0

[illegible]

APPENDIX H

APPENDIX H

PRESENTATION EVALUATION 2004

CONTENT (TOTAL 6)

- Did the group communicate a significant amount of understandable information?
- Did the group use a variety of supporting materials?
- Did the group select and present points of major importance?
- Did the group members appear conversant with the topic and knowledgeable?
- Did the group fulfill time expectations?
- Did the group meet the requirements of the assignment specified?

ORGANISATION (TOTAL 6)

- Did the group have an effective plan for the whole presentation?
- Did the presentation have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Did each part of the presentation achieve the goals anticipated for it?
- Did each group member develop his/her part of the presentation in an orderly fashion?
- Did presenters stick to their designated topic?
- Did presenters develop points systematically and in sufficient detail?

ORAL COMMUNICATION (TOTAL 6)

- Did presenters speak from brief notes, rather than from complete texts?
- Did presenters speak audibly and energetically?
- Did presenters avoid physical and vocal distractions while speaking?
- Did the group appear interested in, and committed to, its audience?
- Did the group employ communication approaches which attempted to invite audience involvement in the presentation?
- Did the group try to be creative in its approach to its topic?

ROLE PERFORMANCE (TOTAL 2)

- Did the members assume presentation tasks that were roughly equal?
- Did each presenter accomplish his/her specific presentation responsibility?

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX I

GRADING OF PRESENTATIONS 2004

Students to indicate by a show of hands whether a particular presenter deserves Symbol A, B, C, D or E.

SYMBOL F

Fail

SYMBOL E

Very poor presentation

SYMBOL D

Poor presentation but does have the potential

SYMBOL C

Presentation has a clear purpose and the central idea being discussed
Have identified introduction, body and conclusion
Contains appropriate supporting materials

SYMBOL B

Displays a clear coherent discussion of an interesting challenging section
Provide appropriate, accurate and supporting materials
Use visual aids to clarify the main points

SYMBOL A

Topic clearly presented in a well structured manner
Maintained audience interest through the presentation
Demonstrates creativity and originality of the presentation

APPENDIX J

APPENDIX J

PEER ASSESSMENT

NAME: GROUP:

- 4- very well
- 3 – well enough
- 2 – to an extent
- 1 – not at all

How well have you:

	MYSELF	STUDENT A	STUDENT B	STUDENT C	STUDENT D	STUDENT E
Contributed to the ideas in your group through the search for information						
Offered fully thought out solutions to your group						
Shown an understanding of the topic researched and been able to use your skills to inform others						
Been punctual in group meetings						
Been giving other members group support and motivation						

APPENDIX K

APPENDIX K: CHECKLIST FOR A GROUP WORK PROJECT

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION I GROUP WORK PROJECT

2004

CHECKLIST FOR ACTIVITIES TO BE COMPLETED

Before the presentation

- ☐ I am clear about the topic and what is expected of us as a group during the presentation?
- ☐ I do know the time and date for our group presentation?

After the presentation

- ☐ Do I know what grade I received for my presentation as an individual?
- ☐ Have we submitted our minutes of meeting a day after our presentation?
- ☐ Have I as an individual submitted my peer evaluation from?
- ☐ Have I submitted my reflection questionnaire about the whole process?